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Nichirenism as Modernism: Imperialism, Fascism, and Buddhism in Modern Japan

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by

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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In 1902 Tanaka Chigaku, the founder of the lay Buddhist Nichirenism movement met Anagarika Dhārmapala, the founder of the international Mahabodhi Society and founder of the prevalent form of modern Sri Lankan Buddhism. Chigaku and Dhārmapala were attempting to transform Buddhism into a foundation for their respective national identities, using it as a pan-Asian basis for a new

and better ordering of the world. They were confronting the universalizing forces of the West. They differed in their respective relationships with imperialism. Dhārmapal's Ceylon was a British colony. Japan was constructing an overseas empire. Nichirenism's "good news" was that the world is divine as it is; people just needed to realize this. Nichirenists ultimately conflated Japanese imperialism and nationalism with this realization.

For some Nichirenists, such as Ishiwara Kanji, solutions lay in violent action. As a Colonel in the Kwantung Army he instigated the Japanese takeover of northeastern China in 1931. Other Nichirenists, such as the writer and agrarian reformer Miyazawa Kenji expressed Tanaka Chigaku's teachings in more innocuous ways. Miyazawa, attempted to transform the world through his literature, and by leading a grassroots cooperative. Senoo Girō became the leader of a Nichirenist youth group with conservative leanings in 1919, but by 1931 Senoo had become a vehement critic of Japanese imperialism. He became staunchly opposed to what he saw as Japanese fascism. In 1931 Senoo founded a socialist youth league that espoused his beliefs on these matters and advocated Buddhist socialism.

Nichirenism complicates conceptualizations of the past. The memory of many inside and outside Japan elides Miyazawa's relationship with Nichirenism due to his contemporary popularity.

Scholars cite Ishiwara's relationship with the movement as an example of why Japanese imperialism was rooted in irrationality, highlighting the putative anachronism Nichirenism as Oriental. These tendencies conceal the relationship between pre-1945 Japan and modern societies more generally. By separating prewar Japan from us so absolutely, historiography obscures the normality of modern violence by portraying it as exceptional.

Introduction

"If we are to think of our modernity as something more than culture or the symptoms of culture (art, poetry, language, etc.), one method alone is available, the discovery and conceptualization of the essential contradiction or contradictions. This method, which is fairly well known under the name of 'dialectic,' is not easy to use. Generally, contradictions come in tight knots, in closely woven textures. How are we to grasp the threads which will lead us into the fabric? Usually, if not always, we end up cutting them off. …. In truth, the contradictions are dialectical movements which knowledge attempts to grasp, fully aware of the fact that these movements are interconnected (another metaphor: a river), and that knowledge operates by a process of separation and immobilization which kills movements dead, and uses techniques operated by conceptual apparatuses such as analysis and logic, etc."

Henri Lefebvre, "What is Modernity?"

"There is nothing extraordinary about fascism. It is normality to the extreme…. Fascism is social Reason, and Reason is its own revenge."

Brian Massumi, *Users Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

Sighing in a Relief That Never Comes

Nichirenshugi 日蓮主義 (Nichirenism) was a pre-1945, Japanese lay Buddhist movement that appropriated teachings of the thirteenth-century monk, Nichiren, and used them in novel ways in modern contexts. Despite the fact that many within Japan and elsewhere have anachronistically and inaccurately labeled Nichiren nationalist, Nichirenism arose only with the advent of the modern nation-state. In the Japanese case, the modern nation-state began to

form around 1868 as part of the so-called Meiji Restoration. Part of why scholars and others frequently call Nichiren himself a nationalist is because of the influence of relatively recent figures associated with Nichirenism, including rightwing terrorists, radical military officers, and others who professed deep concern with Japan's future during the Interwar Period. Driven by such concerns these individuals sometimes engaged in violent acts. They also projected onto the historical figure of Nichiren an image of an idealized man of resolute and iconoclastic action, usually in the name of the nation.[1] By the late medieval period Nichiren's Buddhism became the Hokkeshū (*Lotus* sects), which had less precedent in continental Asia than for example Zen and Pure Land forms of Japanese Buddhism.[2] This and selective readings of texts authored by Nichiren also made it possible to appropriate Nichiren's image and use it as a "native" or "traditional" basis for the promotion of quintessentially modern enterprises, including nationalism, imperialist expansion, and management of the social contradictions and societal strife accompanying industrial capitalism.

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[1] Cf., Jacqueline Stone, "Meiji Buddhism and the 'Nationalizing of Nichiren,'" a 1994 conference paper given in Cambridge Mass. Cited in Richard Jaffe, *Neither Monk nor Layman: Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 175.

[2] Cf., James H. Foard, "In Search of a Lost Reformation: A Reconsideration of Kamakura Buddhism," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 7 no. 4 (December, 1980): 340.

"Nichirenshugi" is moreover a word that all but disappeared from the Japanese language in 1945, much as with the word *kokutai* 国体 ("national polity," or "body politic").[3] Not coincidentally, major proponents of Nichirenism before 1945 frequently paired Nichirenism with *kokutai* as twin conceptual supports for Nichirenist conceptualizations of the Japanese nation and its role in world history. Such Nichirenists include Tanaka Chigaku (1861-1939, hereafter Chigaku) and Ishiwara Kanji (1889-1949); Chigaku coined the term "Nichirenshugi" in 1901 and Ishiwara Kanji—who thought of himself as a disciple of Chigaku—instigated the Japanese takeover of Manchuria in 1931. In fact while doing research on Nichirenism in Japan, circumstances constantly forced me to verbally clarify the fact that I was working on Nichirenshugi and not the relatively orthodox Nichirenshū sect in the Nichiren tradition. With regard to *kokutai*, whenever I mentioned it in Japan most people automatically assumed

[3] English translations of "*kokutai*" are unusually diverse. Probably the most common is "national polity," which I do not use because it does not seem to sum up the range of *kokutai*'s meanings. Another common translation is "national essence." "Essence" contradicts the literal meaning of *kokutai*, the two ideograms of which (国体) mean nation, state, or country combined with body, form, or condition—connoting substance and not essence. I prefer George Tanabe's translation, "body politic," because it seems closest to the literal meaning of the term. See George Tanabe, "Tanaka Chigaku: The Lotus Sūtra and the body politic," in *The Lotus Sūtra and Japanese Culture*, ed. George Tanabe and Willa Jane Tanabe (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 1989), 191–208.

I was referring to the homophonic abbreviation for an annual national athletic meet.

The reason Nichirenshugi and *kokutai* (in the old sense) virtually disappeared from the Japanese language following 1945 is simple. *Kokutai* was such an important and inviolable ideological construct that acting contrary to the *kokutai* before Japan's defeat constituted a capital offense—and the draconian law protecting *kokutai* existed despite the fact that *kokutai*'s meaning was never precisely clear. If you had to ask you did not know, and not knowing in itself constituted a potential "thought crime." Nichirenism's prevalence did not match the universality of *kokutai*—the most important Nichirenist organization, the *Kokuchūkai*, only had a membership of around 7,000 at its height in 1924,[4] but there were numerous Nichirenist groups and Nichirenism's influence extended beyond their memberships. When the war ended, Japanese society associated both words with the country's erstwhile national mission to liberate Asia from Western domination and more broadly to make the world a much better place. Once defeat revealed that the obverse

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[4] Ōtani Eiichi, *Kindai Nihon no Nichirenshugi undō* (Modern Japan's Nichirenism Movement) (Tokyo: Hōzōkan, 2001), 404; Stone, "By Imperial Edict and Shogunal Decree: Politics and the Issue of the Ordination Platform in Modern Lay Nichiren Buddhism," in *Buddhism in the Modern World: Adaptations of an Ancient Tradition*, ed. Steven Heine and Charles S. Prebish (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 198.

of that mission and its material actuality consisted of a brutal Japanese imperialism that did not differ significantly from its Western counterparts, words previously used to articulate that discredited mission disappeared.

In other words, when *kindai* (recent times) became *gendai* (contemporary times), according to standard historiography within Japan, people came to believe they could collectively sigh in relief. They could be glad that the faux modernity Japanese and others could thereafter call fascist or militarist was over. Japan could then become the peace-loving nation that it supposedly was always meant to be. Japanese historians use two systems of periodization. They modeled one system upon Western history. In this system *chūsei* equals "medieval," for example, and *kinsei* is the equivalent of "early modern." In Japan this Western-derived system is the one that makes the *gendai*/*kindai* or modern/contemporary split. Historians of Japan also use a "traditional" periodization that in modern times corresponds to the reign names of emperors. Thus 1945 divides *kindai* from *gendai*, but because the Shōwa Emperor (Hirohito) remained on the throne from his coronation in 1926 until his death in 1989 the *kindai*/*gendai* split manages a merely patchwork attempt to conceal a continuity between the "bad" Japan of old and the "good," new Japan. Despite its 1945 renovation the Japanese emperor system

persisted, as did the reign of Hirohito, and as a result, the Shōwa period encompassed both the period of fascism/militarism and imperialism, and Japan's era of peace and increasing prosperity under United States hegemony.[5]

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[5] For an example of dual periodization in Japanese historiography see Kodansha International, *Japan: Profile of a Nation* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1999), 72-208. This work's eight page "overview" of Japanese history follows periodization analogous with Western historiography, ending with "The Modern Period" (*kindai*) and "The Contemporary Era" (*gendai*). The overview is followed by a much longer and more detailed "History of Japan: By Historical Period (*Nihonshi: Jidaishi*)," which begins with the ca 10,000 BCE-ca 300 BCE Jōmon period and ends with Heisei Period, which is that of the current emperor's reign. See also the section on history in Nippon Steel Corporation, *Nippon: The Land and its People* (Tokyo: Nippon Steel Human Resources and Development, 1988). This work follows the same periodization as Kodansha. Both works are designed to enable Japanese to explain Japan to outsiders. Nippon Steel not only occludes the continuity of modern Japanese history through a change of eras in 1945; it also elides its own role in the development of what Herbert Bix defined as Japanese fascism. See Herbert Bix, "Rethinking Japanese Fascism,: *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*14 (April-June 1982). 14. A typical account of Japanese history in Japanese that articulates the *kindai*/*gendai* split can be found in Ishii Susumu, ed., *Shōsetsu Nihonshi* [Japanese History, a Detailed Account] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1996), where the last two chapters are "Kindai Nihon to Ajia" [Pre-1945 Modern Japan and Asia] and "Gendai no sekai to Nihon" [The postwar modern world and Japan]. In contrast, a typical English language textbook such as Peter Duus' *Modern Japan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) follows its part III, "Political Change, Crisis and War, 1905-1945" with part IV, "Peace, Prosperity, and Stability, 1945-Present." In Duus' case 1945 is indeed a turning point in a narrative of progressive development, but the radical break signified by an entirely new historical period is absent. Lastly, for some interesting musings on the intricacies of modern Japanese periodization and their ramifications see Karatani Kōjin and Seiji M. Lippit, "The Discursive Space of Modern Japan, Japan in the World, *Boundary* 2, 18, no. 3, (Autumn, 1991).

Despite such attempts to obscure the relationship between a modern past now abjected and a postwar world viewed through overly rosy lenses, postwar Japan remains haunted by persistently nagging suspicions that everything did not really change so much in 1945 after all.[6] For example, the country's leadership hardly changed. United States authorities sacrificed token "war criminals" during the occupation, but one accused war criminal, Kishi Nobusuke, became Prime Minister by the end of the 1950s. Even more importantly, Japanese and non-Japanese characterize the pre-1945 Japanese past as fascist, militarist, or imperialist, and these signifiers refer to realities that many believe we have overcome. I argue that these terms refer to conditions and processes that haunt our world even today.

Fascism, militarism, and imperialism suggest comprehensive violence and social, political, economic, and cultural crises, along with systemic unevenness in the distribution of wealth and power. Any sober look at daily headlines reveals that such conditions persist, despite postwar formal decolonization and ongoing battles between "good" and "evil" in the decades since. This work is an attempt to confront the conceptual repression of the persistence of violence

[6] On the concept of abjection and the lingering of the abjected (instead of the "return of the repressed") see Ann McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 71-2.

within the modern world before and after 1945. In other words, I aim to investigate historical events and processes in order to address the misrecognition of the present. I want to understand Nichirenism and in so doing better understand the fundamental contradictions of modern existence. At this juncture it appears that such contradictions are not to be overcome automatically as scholars have frequently imagined in a Hegelian or classically Marxist mode. To me it appears that the genius of liberal capitalist modernity as a functioning whole is that it thrives on its contradictions. It requires them. Because of this, neither an automatic nor a humanly facilitated progression to a more rational stage of development seems likely any time soon. Faith in rationality and progress may turn out have more to do with our problems than with any solution. On the other hand, the temporality of the modern still demands displays of at least feigned faith in development, especially of historians, despite whatever cynicism we might actually possess.[7]

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[7] On the relationship between cynicism and the modern, see Henre Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes*, trans. John Moore (New York: Verso 1995), 228-9; Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), 136; Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis* (New York: Routledge,1999), 79-80; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 250. Cf., two apologies for the belief in progress that are separated by nearly forty years and yet are remarkably similar:

Historiography and Nichirenism

In reading about modern Japan prior to the end of the Second World War, one comes across sporadic mentions of Nichirenism—or the "Nichiren Buddhism" of certain politically radical figures and others whom I would define as Nichirenist. This happens in surprisingly different contexts. Perhaps most characteristically one runs across references to Nichirenism in studies of Japanese fascism, militarism, rightwing terrorism, and imperialism. Western scholars wrote such studies for the most part during the postwar decades, until the 1970s.[8] Despite modernization theory's preference for studies of the premodern foundations of Japan's postwar success, these studies were written during the heyday of Western historiography's depiction of Japan as the global "model minority."[9] In the context of such

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Edward Hallet Car, *What is History* (New York: Vintage, 1967), especially, 158; and Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover NH: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), especially, 155-6.

[8] For historiography in English see especially Richard Storry, *Double Patriots: A Study of Japanese Nationalism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), pp. 100-14; Ben-Ami Shillony, *Revolt in Japan: The Young Officers and the February 26, 1936, Incident* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); George Wilson, *Radical Nationalist in Japan: Kita Ikki, 1883-1937* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969); Mark Peattie, *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[9] On Japan as global "model minority" see T. Fujitani, "Go For Broke, the Movie: Japanese American Soldiers in the U.S. National, Military, and Racial Discourses," in *Perilous Memories*, ed. T. Fujitani, Geoffrey White, and Lisa Yoneyama (Durham: Duke UP,

writings Nichirenism was frequently something that needed to be explained away along with the rest of Japan's period within the "dark valley" of the 1930s and early 1940s.

However, one of the first, albeit fleeting and indirect, postwar treatments of Nichirenism came from a Japanese source. In the immediate postwar milieu, Maruyama Masao condemned Inoue Nisshō (hereafter Nisshō) while discussing the pathology of Japanese fascism. Nisshō was the leader of the Ketsumeidan (Blood-Pledge Corps), a group of terrorists who planned and executed the eponymous Ketsumeidan Jiken (Blood-Pledge Corps Incident). During this 1932 series of events a young follower of Nisshō shot and killed Inoue Junnosuke, the leader of the Minseitō political party and a former Minister of Finance. Later a Ketsumeidan member also murdered Dan Takuma, the head of the Mitsui industrial combine (*zaibatsu*). The Ketsumeidan Incident was part of events collectively called the Shōwa Restoration, something frequently involving Nichirenism-grounded notions regarding the relationship between

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2001), especially, 251-362. On Modernization theory's articulation of Japan more generally also see Harry Harootunian, *The Emperor's New Clothes: Paradigm Lost, and Regained* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004), 77-89; Stefan Tanaka, "Objectivism and the Eradication of Critique in Japanese History," in *Learning Places: The afterlives of area studies*, ed. Masao Miyoshi and Harry Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 92-99; Sheldon Garon, "Rethinking Modernization and Modernity in Japanese History: A Focus on State-Society Relations," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53 no. 2 (May 1994): especially, 346-350.

direct action and both national and universal salvation. As with those planning or executing other such incidents—the March Incident (1931), the October Incident (1931), the May 15 Incident (1932) and the February 1936 Incident—Ketsumeidan members strove to purify the nation by eliminating those whom they thought were betraying it in international affairs or profiting from the misery of the people during a time of economic hardship.[10]

For Maruyama, Nisshō exemplified the extreme "fantasy, abstraction, and lack of a plan" characterizing early Japanese fascism or "fascism from below." Maruyama quoted a statement Nisshō made at his trial: "I have no systematized ideas. I transcend reason and act completely upon intuition." Maruyama noted that Nisshō "deliberately rejected any theory for constructive planning …." In the English edition of Maruyama's text his translator tells us in a footnote that "Inoue was a Nichiren priest" and suggests that his apparent anti-intellectualism was a product of "Buddhist philosophy."[11]

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[10] On the Shōwa Restoration in general see Storry, Shillony, Wilson, and Peattie. Regarding the Shōwa Restoration's broader intellectual underpinnings see Tetsuo Najita and H.D. Harootunian, "Japanese Revolt Against the West: Political and Cultural Criticism in the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Japan* vol. 6, The Twentieth Century (New York: Cambridge University Press), 711-774.

[11] Maruyama wrote the essay in question, "The Ideology and Dynamics of Japanese Fascism," as a 1947 lecture he gave at Tokyo

Further analysis of Nisshō's biography reveals the fact that his identity was significantly more complex. Nisshō's earliest Buddhist training occurred in Manchuria. He was a continental adventurer (*tairiku rōnin*) between 1910 and 1920, and between wild drinking bouts, visiting brothels, doing odd jobs for Japan's South Manchurian Railway, and spying for the Chinese Republicans during the 1911 Revolution and the Japanese army during World War I, he also found time to seek spiritual training from Japanese missionaries. He studied and practiced on the continent with both Nichiren and Zen clergy. After returning to Japan in 1920, Nisshō continued his Buddhist training. He later reported in an autobiography that the practice of Zen meditation only increased his "mental anguish." Because of this Nisshō soon switched to chanting the *daimoku*, a ritual praise of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the primary practice in the Nichiren tradition.

More specifically, Nisshō reported, he began to chant the *daimoku* because of an earlier dream he had had in China, in which—finding himself in a "life threatening situation"—he saw the *daimoku*, "*namu Myōhō Rengekyō*" (praise to the *Lotus Sūtra of the Wondrous*

University. It was translated and included in *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, ed. Ivan Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963). The quotes are from p. 53. Morris included a glossary and biographies of terms and names. He notes that Nisshō was a "Nichiren priest of extreme rightist beliefs who before turning to Buddhism had spent most of his life on the continent as a secret agent for the Japanese army" (303).

Dharma), engraved on a stone pagoda. After continuing to chant the *daimoku* for several months a strange voice called out to him, "Nisshō!" (Sun-Called), a name he subsequently adopted.[12] Later, as he continued to chant, Nisshō heard the same voice telling him that he was "the savior," while he saw his surroundings become bathed in light. He felt a serene peace that eased existential doubts that had plagued him for decades [13]

In the ensuing years Nisshō visited sacred sites of the Nichiren tradition, and in the autumn of 1924 a strange voice spoke to him again, telling him that he should study Nichiren with Chigaku, which he did. He also attended lectures at the Tokyo headquarters of Honda Nisshō, a priest who was second only to Chigaku as a Nichirenist leader, but who did not rival Chigaku in terms of charisma and influence. Later, in his own writings and while standing trial for his involvement in the Ketsumeidan Incident,

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[12] Nisshō previously went by the name "Akira" 昭. Nisshō 日昭 is similar to the names ordained Nichiren clergy usually take because the first Chinese ideograph (*kanji*) in the compound is 日(sun), as was the case with Nichiren 日蓮. Chigaku was originally known as Tomoenosuke, and he started his own tradition when he named himself 知学 (knowledge and learning). Chigaku's disciples often followed by taking names for themselves that began with "chi" 知 (knowledge).

[13] Brian Daizen Victoria, "The Ethical Implications of Zen-related Terrorism in 1930s Japan," www.acmuller.net-zen-sem-2004-victoria.html.html; Stephan S. Large, "National Extremism in Early Shōwa Japan: Inoue Nisshō and the 'Blood-Pledge Corp Incident', 1932" *Modern Asian Studies* 35, no. 3 (2001): 536-539.

Nisshō credited Chigaku with confirming his own beliefs. These beliefs centered on the identity of the national symbols of Japan, including the imperial house, and the "great life force" (*daiseimei*), which is of course nothing other than the cosmic, eternal original Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

In 1928 a former Imperial Household Minister, along with a transportation tycoon, invited Nisshō to help found a temple near Mito, Ibaragi Prefecture, northeast of the Tokyo area. Nisshō named the temple the Risshō Gokokudo (Temple to Protect the Nation [by] Establishing Truth). At first Inoue declined involvement because the temple lacked traditional parishioners, and therefore no apparent source of income. This was however not a problem because military and political elites supported the temple. The temple's elite backers designed it to cultivate the morality of Japanese youths, becoming a "foundation for the reform of the state." Accepting this mission, Nisshō became the Risshō Gokokudo's "priest," and he proceeded to train young men there in "do or die" spirit grounded in "Buddhism." The Ketsumeidan Incident was the end product this training.[14]

Maruyama discussed Nisshō in order to illustrate the putative immaturity and lack of modern subjectivity defining Japanese fascism. He did much the same with regard to other individuals and

[14] Ibid.

groups involved in 1930s terrorism. Some of these also had a relationship with modern "Nichiren Buddhism," including the "radical nationalist" Kita Ikki, and the young army officers under his influence who led an infamous February 1936 coup attempt in Tokyo.[15] Maruyama's celebration of Western modernity in contradistinction to a Japanese pathological lack of subjectivity reached its crescendo when he compared the behavior of Nazi leaders at their war crimes trials with that of Japanese wartime leaders at analogous trials in Tokyo. For Maruyama the Nazis were relatively admirable fascists because, unlike Japanese, as Occidentals they possessed modern subjectivity.[16]

Later Western treatments of figures connected to Nichirenism and modern "Nichiren Buddhism" sometimes go into greater detail regarding the significance of these modern Buddhist forms, but they never really break with Maruyama's at least implicit condemnation of wartime and prewar Japanese for their lack of maturity. In other words, from the perspective of the Christian or post-Christian ("secular") West, writers have characterized such individuals as Kita Ikki and Ishiwara Kanji as not quite human ("rational") in the way

[15] Wilson produced the term "Radical nationalist" in an attempt to categorize Kita.
[16] See Masao Miyoshi, *Off/Center: Power and Culture Relations Between Japan and the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 1998), 108-9.

that "we" are. Even recent and relatively very informative studies of Nichirenists such as Tanaka Chigaku and Ishiwara by religious studies scholars sometimes persist in implicit condemnation of Nichirenism because of its "millennialism," which signifies its embrace of historical circularity, ritualized behavior, superstition, and myth, contra "our" recognition of the value of progressive change or differentiation, originality, rational transcendence, and science.[17]

One runs across references to Nichirenism in other contexts as well, and this is where the contradictions of Nichirenism become apparent. In writings addressing the life and work of Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933), a poet and children's writer, scholars often mention that he was in some way connected with "Buddhism," "Nichiren Buddhism," or Nichirenism. Works in English seldom address the great degree to which Miyazawa idolized Tanaka Chigaku for most of his adult life. Sarah Strong's Ph.D. dissertation is a notable exception, but even her work spends little time exploring the meaning of any possible contradiction between "Kenji," whom

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[17] On the ways that religious studies consistently portrays the "other" as not quite human in the same way that "we" secular or Christians are see Jonathon Z. Smith, "A Slip in Time Saves Nine" in *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time*, ed. John Bender and David Wellberry, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), especially 69-70 and 76. On Nichirenism as Millennialism see Jacqueline Stone, "Japanese Lotus Millenarianism: From Nationalism to Contemporary Peace Movements" in *Millennialism, Persecution and Violence: Historical Cases*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

innumerable fans regard as an extremely loveable figure, and Nichirenism, which many scholars in Japan and elsewhere regard as ultranationalistic, militarist, fascist, and inherently imperialistic. In Japanese there is a much more extensive literature addressing Miyazawa's relationship with Buddhism, but rather than dwell upon Miyazawa as a Nichirenist the writers of these works tend to suggest that Miyazawa's religiosity was a pure, generic form of universal or Japanese Buddhism. In the second chapter of this dissertation I address more fully the problematic way that we remember Miyazawa and consume his work.

Those discussing Takayama Chogyū (1871-1902), the much-celebrated novelist and cultural critic, also frequently mention Nichirenism. As the story goes, he alternated in turn from infatuations with Japanism (*Nihonshugi*), Nietzscheanism, and Nichirenism before his suicide 1902. Reading Chigaku's seminal extended essay, *Shūmon no ishin* (The renovation of our sect, 1901), deeply moved Takayama. He subsequently met Chigaku and wrote essays praising both Chigaku and Nichiren. His Nichirenist writings, written at the very end of his life, suggest that Takayama conflated his interpretation of the Nietzschian "superman" with Nietzsche,

Chigaku, and Nichiren.[18] Takayama, perhaps modern Japan's most famous avowed "egoist," praised Nichiren as "an individualist who overcame the present to 'follow the dictates of his heart, independently, freely.'"[19]

Like many modern admirers of Nichiren, Takayama saw in the medieval monk a model for a new, modern Japanese spirit that was the antithesis of Orientalist clichés about the Japanese that Takayama (and Maruyama) accepted, such as that the Japanese are group-oriented or herd-like and lack a sense of individuality (or

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[18] Anesaki and Yamakawa Chiō (a Kokuchūkai intellectual and scholar of Nichiren Buddhism) edited Takayama's writings on Nichiren and Nichirenism, publishing them as Takayama Chogyū, *Takayama Chogyū to Nichiren shōnin* [Takayama Chogyū and Saint Nichiren] (Tokyo Hakubunkan, 1913). In this volume particularly see "Tanaka Chigaku shi no *Shūmon no ishin*" [Mr. Tanaka Chigaku's *Shūmon no ishin*], 15-20; "Nichiren shōnin" [Saint Nichiren], 21-23; and "Nichiren shōnin wa ikanaru hito zo" [What the hell kind of person was Saint Nichiren?], 24-53. The volume also includes a preface by Tanaka Chigaku praising Takayama and a collection of letters from Chogyū to Chigaku, Anesaki, and Yamakawa. Essays on Takayama's Nichirenist religiosity by Yamakawa and Anesaki are also appended. Ōtani (p. 288), notes that during a 1920s "boom" in interest in Nichiren, Fujii Masazumi published *Chōnin Nichiren* (*Nichiren Superman*) (1923), suggesting that Takayama was not the last to equate Nichiren with the "superman." Ōtani does not specify what kind of work it was, but judging by the context it was a novel, a play, or a biography.

[19] Harootunian, "Beyond Politics and Culture: Authority and the Ambiguities of Intellectual Choice in Imperial Japan," in *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taishō Democracy*, ed. Bernard S. Silberman and Harootunian (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 144. In the same volume see pp. 146-155 regarding Takayama's conflation of Nichiren and Nietzsche. In the quotation above Harootunian is citing and quoting Takayama's 1902 "Nichiren shōnin to Nihonkoku ["Saint Nichiren and Japan"].

subjectivity). This is somewhat ironic because the qualities that Takayama discovered in Nichiren and Nichirenists are precisely the ones that Maruyama found lacking in the "fascist" Japanese who embraced Nichirenism. Takayama encountered Nichirenism and Chigaku late in his short life and early in the movement's history. Perhaps his most lasting effect upon the subsequent development of Nichirenism was his introduction of the thought of Chigaku to his friend, the pioneering religious studies scholar Anesaki Chōfū (pen name, Masaharu, 1873-1949). Anesaki subsequently became a close friend of Chigaku's and remained so for the rest of the Nichirenism founder's life.[20]

Anesaki wrote the first monograph on Nichiren in English, *Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet* (1916), publishing the work in Japanese as *Hokkekyō no gyōja Nichiren* (Nichiren: Practitioner of the *Lotus Sūtra*) in the same year.[21] He had already founded the

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[20] On Takayama and Nichirenism, see also Shinohara Kōichi, "Buddhism and the Problem of Modernity in East Asia: Some Exploratory Comments Based on the Example of Takayama Chogyū" *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 8, no. 2. (March-June 1981); Takagi Yutaka, "Kindai no Nichiren ron: Takayama Chogyū no baai" [On modernity's Nichiren: the case of Takayama Chogyū] in *Kindai Nihon no Hokke Bukkyō*, ed. Mochizuki Kankō (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shōten, 1968), 379-400. See especially Takagi's part III, "Chogyū no Nichiren ron" [Chogyū's discourse on Nichiren] and part IV, Nihonshugi to Nichiren [Nietzschianism and Nichiren], 396-400.

[21] Anesaki Masaharu, *Nichiren, the Buddhist Prophet* (Gloucester Mass: P. Smith, 1966); Anesaki Masaharu, *Hokkekyō no gyōja Nichiren* (Tokyo: Kokushō Kankōkai, 1953).

Religious Studies section at Tokyo Imperial University, holding a chair in the science of religion from 1905. Anesaki also taught classes on Buddhism at Harvard as a visiting professor in the Philosophy Department in 1913. Today, in Japan and abroad Anesaki enjoys a reputation as a fine and liberal-minded scholar. However, he was one of the earliest to articulate a purported Japanese mission to synthesize the "scientific" civilization of the West with the "spiritual" civilization of an Asia led by Japan. For Anesaki, Japan was clearly superior to other Asian nations, which needed Japan's guidance. Such notions constituted the ideological core of Japanese imperialism from the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 until 1945.[22] It was no accident that Anesaki and Chigaku were friends, nor, as I will argue below, is it surprising that the institution of the "scientific" study of religion was married to the "irrationality" of Nichirenism. Moreover, the fact that Nichirenism's recruits read *Hokkekyō no gyōja Nichiren* as fervently as they read the extensive work of Chigaku and other, more "militarist" Nichirenists attests to the significance of Anesaki's relationship with Nichirenism.

From a commonsense perspective it remains difficult to define and comprehend Nichirenism. From such a viewpoint figures like

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[22] See James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and its Persecution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 217-8.

Anesaki and Miyazawa are great humanitarians who were leaders in Japan's successful approximation of the cultural modernity of the West. Miyazawa has the reputation of a saint in contemporary Japan and at the beginning of the twenty-first century Anesaki's portrait still hung on the wall of Tokyo University's Religious Studies Department's office. In contradistinction to this people with knowledge of Japanese history know Ishiwara as the man who began the fifteen-years of warfare culminating in abject defeat in 1945. Students of Japanese history know Nisshō as an "irrational" terrorist. Those with knowledge of modern Japanese religions know Chigaku as the man who influenced these two, as well as other violent individuals. Nichirenism is ridden with contradictions. In this it is similar to modernity itself. Both are only definable with reference to their contradictions. In what remains of this introduction, I will attempt to define Nichirenism and then modernity. Finally I will address the relationship between Nichirenism and modernity.

Defining Nichirenism

Chigaku coined the word "Nichirenshugi" in a series of essays culminating in *Shūmon no ishin*. With the neologism he emphasized the particularly modern character of the movement. The suffix "*shugi*" translates as "ism." Japanese translated the various forms or systems ("isms") of modern thought imported into Japan around the

time of the Meiji Restoration using "*shugi*." Such terms included capitalism (*shihonshugi*), nationalism (*kokkashugi*), imperialism (*teikokushugi*), liberalism (*jiyūshugi*), communism (*kyōsanshugi*), and anarchism (*museifushugi*).

Shugi's older meaning of "principle" in premodern philosophical discourse did not disappear from Nichirenist writings, because Chigaku and others occasionally used it as a stand-alone word, unlike "ism" in standard English. However, the fact that Chigaku's son, Satomi Kishio, published a book in English in 1923 titled *Japanese Civilization: Nichirenism and the Japanese National Principles* suggests that Nichirenists took it for granted that "*shugi*" equaled "ism."[23] "Buddhism" does not include "*shugi*" when translated into standard Japanese. Instead the Japanese word is "Bukkyō" (teachings of the Buddha). "Bukkyō" was in most ways a fully modern concept,[24] yet despite this the term fails to readily

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[23] Satomi, Kishio, *Japanese Civilization: Its Significance and Realization: Nichirenism and the Japanese National Principles* (London: Routledge, 1923).

[24] In an unpublished paper, "Transformations and Continuities in the Vocabulary of Japanese Religion," p. 6, Levi McLauglin notes the way that in premodern contexts words such as *Buppō* [Buddha-dharma,] *Butsudō* [Way of the Buddha] were used more commonly than *Bukkyō*. "Buddhism" did not have a standard translation before the modern period because it did not form a discrete and singular, identifiable essence as it generally does in the context of the modern. Cf., note 28. See also Jonathon Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religions" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C.

disclose its recent etymology. Clearly, Chigaku self-consciously chose to connote a modernism with his choice of words. Nichirenism, as an "ism," manifests a dynamic and future-oriented temporality. Liberalism, for example, tends to suggest the progressive realization of a more equitable world. Nichirenism too embodied a hope and a faith in the realization of a new and better world.[25]

Beginning with Chigaku, Nichirenists framed the better future they imagined with two axiomatic propositions. The first was that the divinity of an eternal, original Buddha permeates the quotidian world. Various forms of Buddhism, Japanese and non-Japanese, have espoused the immanence of Buddhist divinity; the differences are in the details. Nichiren emphasized the *Lotus Sūtra*, and especially the sixteenth chapter, as the locus of the entire universe's actualization of awakening. In that so-called "Fathoming the Lifespan" chapter, the "historical Buddha" Śākyamuni reveals the "secret" that he has always, already been within in our world as a fully awakened

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Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 269-284; Shimazono Susumu, "Shūkyō to 'Religion'" *Ōfu* 87 (October 2001).

[25] Cf., Reinhart Kosselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation': Two Historical Categories," *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 286-7. In this essay Kosselleck notes Kant's distinction between a "republic" as "a defined objective, derivable from practical reason and constantly present for mankind" and "republicanism" as "the path to it," the process of displacing "the rule of men by men with the rule of men by law; i.e., to realize the republic."

presence. This runs counter to early Buddhism's focus upon the Buddha's personal awakening. Instead, according to the *Lotus*, Śākyamuni was a provisional manifestation of a more fundamental cosmic Buddha that exists in perpetuity.

The *Lotus Sūtra*'s sixteenth chapter suggests that absolute awakening constitutes the general, but not necessarily actualized, divine character of the entire universe. In accordance with this logic, all one has to do is realize the "secret" of the *Lotus* and suffering will end. Nichiren, like many medieval Japanese Buddhists, believed that the world had entered *mappō*, the third, last, and most degraded period of Buddhist history, because it was most temporally distant from the actual presence of Śākyamuni. In that context Nichiren taught that one could actualize the world and oneself as identical with the cosmic Buddha only by chanting praise to the *Lotus Sūtra* (the *daimoku*). This would cause one to embody the realization that from an ultimate perspective *mappō* was irrelevant because the Buddha is always present.

It is important to underscore that Nichiren subordinated temporal authority to the teachings of Buddhism and did not privilege the political powers on the Japanese archipelago during his lifetime (shogun and emperor) in any way. He was a staunch critic of reigning political authorities and they persecuted him. In the modern

context however, Nichirenists like Chigaku imagined the divine immanence of the Buddha/*Lotus Sūtra* as especially concentrated in the modern nation-state of Japan and its imperial house. For modern Nichirenism the activities of the modern nation-state of Japan and its emperor were ipso facto the activities of the Buddha. They were able to make the leap from *Lotus* Buddhism's affirmation of the whole universe to the apotheosis of Japan through a logic grounded Nichiren's affirmation of where and when he lived, a space that happened to correspond with the Japanese archipelago. In short, Chigaku and Nichirenists made a conceptual jump from the deification of this world and this life to the apotheosis of Japan as the concrete embodiment of an especially divine form of human existence.[26] In so doing they avoided privileging the transcendent, bypassing the despotism of metaphysics, only to reinvest the nation with a neo-despotism that reduced the universe from an infinity of possible variations to be affirmed to a conformity to what "must be," imagined as national will and national destiny.

The second axiomatic proposition at the basis of Nichirenism involves a geo-temporal logic that resonates in particular with Hegelian notions about the relationship between time, geography, and the development of Spirit espoused in *The Philosophy of History*

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[26] Cf., Jaffe, 179.

(1837). Hegelian conceptualizations of History and Spirit furthermore influenced a "secular" discourse on Japan shared by such writers as Okakura Tenshin (*Ideals of the East*, 1904) and Watsuji Tetsurō (*Koji Junrei*, 1919).[27] The ideas of Hegel and their Japanese manifestations in the work of Okakura and Watsuji also resonated with Anesaki's academic treatment of Buddhism and its relationship with Japan and history. In the Nichirenist idiom, what one might call the "Spirit" of Buddhism migrated eastward from India. As it

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[27] See Okakura Tenshin, *Ideals of the East* (Rutland Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1970); Watsuji Tetsurō, *Koji Junrei* [Pilgrimage to ancient temples] (Tokyo: Iwanmi Shoten, 1953). In brief, Okakura argued that "Asia is one," but that Japan in particular was the storehouse of the Spirit of Asian civilization because, historically, that Sprit moved eastward with Asian art to Japan, where it found its terminus. According to Watsuji, following the combination of the Greek Spirit with Buddhist art in what is now northwestern Pakistan during the Hellenistic age, the Greek Spirit traveled with Buddhism to Japan along the silk roads, where it flourished. Watsuji thus implicitly argued that the Spirit at the foundation of the Western propensity to progress came to Japan in ancient times. Watsuji's work suggested that despite a long period of latency or dormancy, Japan's long-ago reception of the Greek Spirit explains and legitimates Japanese modernity, Japanese superiority over other Asians, and Japanese imperialism. On Okakura also see Stefan Tanaka, *New Times in Modern Japan* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004), 101-110; on Watsuji see Ibid., 177-179. On "Greco-Buddhist" art see Stanley K. Abe, "Curators of the Buddha: Buddhist Art and the West" in *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 63-10. Abe's essay demonstrates how imperialist discourses used the idea of Greco-Buddhist art to portray an Indian loss of its own ancient, high (Aryan) cultural forms, demonstrating an Indian need for British "guidance." Watsuji co-opted such discourses and used them towards new but related ends.

traveled towards the east it became more powerful, and upon reaching Japan it blossomed as it had never blossomed before.

For many medieval Japanese, Buddhism's flowering in Japan corresponded with *mappō*, but for Nichiren and later Nichirenists, the flourishing of Buddhism in Japan also corresponded with the "loss" of Buddhism on the Asian continent. According to Nichiren's logic, Mappō inverted the logic of earlier times, meaning that previously marginal Japan had the mission of saving China and India from irreligion. In modern times, Nichirenist discourse conflated saving regions west of Japan in a Buddhist sense with a mission to save Asia and eventually even the rest of the non-West from Western imperialism. Among other things, then, Nichirenism expressed one set of Japanese versions of the West's "White man's burden" or "civilizing mission." Japanese imperialist ideology in general combined the imperative to save non-Westerners from themselves with an imperative to deliver the non-West from the evils of Western imperialism. In Tanaka Chigaku's language this was the divine mission (*tengyō* or "heavenly task") of "world unification" (*sekai tōitsu*), and by world unification he meant a rectification of the heterogeneity that is "uneven development" by another name.[28]

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[28] For a general definition of uneven development in the Marxist tradition see Ernest Mandel's entry on the term in *Marxist Thought*, 2nd ed., ed. Tom Bottomore (Cambridge Mass: Blackwell, 1991), 559.

In the chapter immediately following this introduction we will see how Chigaku mediated the dialectical relationship between these two fundamental propositions. I contend they are dialectical because they exemplify the contradictory unity one finds within many modern structures, including that of the nation-state. The nation-state requires a façade of ahistorical, stable identity. This corresponds to Nichirenism's view of Japan as the seat of eternal divinity. Yet the

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My usage is most indebted to Lefebvre and Harootunian. In "What is Modernity?" Lefebvre emphasizes that "uneven development is all pervasive" (235), a fact intimately connected to what he calls the "ghost of the Revolution which never happened over here" and the "ghost of the Revolution which was never completed over there (in the Soviet Union)" (236). Lefebvre furthermore proposes, "using the concept of *uneven development* to the full" (emphasis in original), "applying it to everyday life, private life, morality, aesthetics, and not simply to the modalities of the cumulative process." For me "uneven development" is one way to conceptualize the apparently everlasting perpetuation of contradictions and irrationalities in modern life. In *Overcome by Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), Harootunian builds on Lefebvre's concept of uneven development, arguing that "lived unevenness in both the political economic and sociocultural domains" constitutes the normal situation in the context of global, liberal capitalist modernity (Preface, xxii). He aptly characterizes this modernity as one of "constant expansion" requiring "permanent production of excess, surplus in order for it to survive." He argues that permanent unevenness, permanent imbalance between various sectors of social formations" and "the sacrifice of some regions or social economic sectors for the sake of others are the prices paid for that continual expansion" (xv). Lastly, Harootunian contrasts his own conceptualizations of uneven development with "the necessary illusion of eventual even development (that constitutes) a kind of promissory note on the future that is never delivered, even in the last instance." In this sense of utopian dreaming of the evenness to come in an ill-defined future, even development is most similar to Chigaku's equally ill-defined "world unification."

nation-state must also embrace progress, and this corresponds with Nichirenism's conviction that Japan and only Japan could save the world by turning the geographical direction of Buddhism's development around, causing all nations to realize the truth that is both immanent within the world and imminent as an end of history. This end of history corresponds with the end of Western exploitation of the non-West, and would in other words be the end of divisive conflict in general.

As I will subsequently argue, Chigaku's incredible charisma resulted from his simultaneous embodiment of such contradictory propositions. He expressed contradictory tendencies as virtual possibilities and thus avoided the impossibility of their simultaneous actuality. Chigaku's expertise at communicating pure virtualites largely explains why he and his Nichirenism were able to inspire such a wide variety of people and projects. He supplied pure inspirational intensity (affect). Others supplied the content. As I will argue more fully below, Chigaku's "impossibility" links him with other "modernists against modernity,"[29] Japanese and non-Japanese, who were caught up in the conundrums of, as Harry Harootunian has put it, trying to overcome an overcoming.[30]

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[29] Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, xxi. The phrase is Raymond Williams'.
[30] Ibid., 45, 94.

Modernity

In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* Marlowe makes a sort of pilgrimage to the interior of Africa on a boat journeying up the Congo, where he meets Kurtz, the employee of a Belgian company engaged in the ivory trade. Kurtz's incapacity to maintain a distinction between his own "civilized" nature and the "savages" with whom he consorts has led to a life-threatening dissipation. Kurtz's worsening condition threatens profits, leading his company to send Marlowe to manage the situation. Before Kurtz dies in the "heart" of the "dark continent" he utters the famous last words, "the horror, the horror." It then becomes Marlowe's responsibility to visit Kurtz's fiancé in Antwerp to explain the circumstances of his demise, which Marlowe fails to do, as if telling her Kurtz's last words would itself somehow transgress the boundary between sanity and insanity, civilization and savagery, the line that Kurtz himself apparently crossed.

When Conrad's Marlowe describes events that occur in what he calls the "sepulchral city" of Antwerp, he constantly evokes forms of "darkness" within the Belgian city. By doing so he begins to call into question the assumption that the "heart of darkness" is within Africa alone. Marlowe confirms these suggestions when he notes the piano in the room where Marlowe meets Kurtz's intended bride. The

piano and its ivory keys are an obvious reference to the interrelationship between the real and imagined violence of the non-West and the metropolitan centers of imperialist powers. Conrad implies that the violence of the ivory trade, including the mass slaughter of elephants in order to harvest their trunks while leaving their carcasses rotting, was integrally connected to manifestations of European high culture (music). To placate Kurtz's fiancé's queries regarding Kurtz's last words, Marlowe tells her that Kurtz's last words were her name. With this Conrad equates her with "the horror." As an evocation of Victorian familial ideals she represents the sham purity of bourgeois Europe. Conrad suggests that the true horror lies in repressing the violence that makes Kurtz's bride-to-be and her life possible. This is violence that from conventional perspectives not only always takes place elsewhere, but also is always someone else's fault.

Conrad's representation of the interrelationship between the "dark continent" and the "sepulchral" metropole suggests a general definition of modernity. Most definitions of modernity until quite recently define it as something possessed first of all by the West. The rest of the world, according to such conceptualizations, would lie somewhere along an evolutionary continuum, with sub-Saharan Africa and similar regions defined as most primitive, and the Middle

East and most of Asia falling into the category of the semi-civilized and perhaps the semi-modern. Japan, according to this mode of thought, is the exception that proves the rule: the non-West can become modern, more-or-less, but probably not quite, and the measure for the non-West's modernity is the degree to which it approximates Western cultural forms. In contrast, my conceptualization of modernity repudiates the notion that the (modern) West and the (non-modern) non-West are or have ever been hermitically sealed from each other. For me, modernity is only comprehensible from a perspective that defines it as a set of relationships between the West and the non-West since the so-called age of discovery. In other words, modernity is definable only with reference to relationships between what it supposedly is and what it supposedly is not. Furthermore, as Conrad aptly implies, modernity is an affair orchestrated by imperialist processes.

Even the Buddhism that figures such as Anesaki and Chigaku attached their identities to, and the religion as most of us know it, is itself largely a product of modernity and imperialism. When German and Dutch scholars gave birth to the concept of a "science of religions" (*religionwissenshaft*) during the late nineteenth century they were vigorously engaged in a debate over another, now prevalent, concept of "world religions." Scholars would eventually

subsume Buddhism within this category, along with other reputedly transnational, trans-regional religions such as Christianity and Islam. However, according to Tomoko Masuzawa, at that time:

> Buddhism had only recently been recognized as 'the same' tradition existing in diverse regions of South, Southeast, East, and Central Asia. Until that time, neither European observers nor, for the most part, native 'practitioners' of those various devotional, contemplative, divinatory, funereal, and other ordinary and extraordinary cults that are now roundly called Buddhist had thought of these divergent rites and widely scattered institutions as constituting a single religion.[31]

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[31] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or How European Universalism was preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). The above quotation is from p. 122. On the origin of world religions see Chapter three, "The Birth Trauma of World Religions," 107-120. Also see Richard King, "Orientalism and the Discovery of 'Buddhism'' in his *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and "The Mystic East*" (New York: Routledge, 1999), 143-160. Lastly, for a fascinating account of the way that modern conceptualizations of culture, religion, and Buddhism transformed Japanese society see Jackie (Jacqueline) Stone, "A Vast and Grave Task: Interwar Buddhist Studies as an Expression of Japan's Envisioned Global Role" in *Culture and Identity: Japanese Intellectuals During the Interwar Years*, ed. Thomas Rimer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 217-233. Stone demonstrates how Japanese clergy and scholars of Buddhism adjusted to and in several cases fully accepted Western Buddhology's focus on early Buddhism. She also shows how and why Japanese co-opted the modern study of Buddhism. When these Japanese intellectuals did so they sometimes claimed a historically improbable special relationship between Japan and early Buddhism. Moreover, some such scholars and clergy clearly saw the use-value of Buddhism in promoting and legitimizing Japanese imperialism. Modern Japanese custodianship of Buddhism established both an affinity with continental neighbors as fellow Buddhists, as well as a putative Japanese superiority over them because Japanese scholarship that took Asian cultural forms such as Buddhism as their object of investigation appropriated the "scientific"

Until relatively recently, in other words, educated Europeans were unaware that there was a religion called “Buddhism” in Asia, instead of a relatively irrelevant hodgepodge of primitive idolatrous practices.

This burgeoning consciousness of Buddhism had two effects. On the one hand, Europeans—and eventually educated non-Europeans as well—began to denigrate the actual practices of “Buddhists.” People came to deny the authenticity and the purity of centuries of heterogeneous religious activities across the Asian continent, religiosities that for example had always combined Buddhist cultural forms originating elsewhere (places that may or may not have been within the Indian subcontinent) with local cults, producing endlessly novel and variegated manifestations. On the other hand, Europeans—and eventually others—came to regard an imagined original Buddhism located in certain texts, which referred to ideas attributed to the so-called historical Buddha, as the only true Buddhism. Modern thought conceptually transformed the religiosities of an immense number of people from a vast collection of infinite and infinitely interesting singularities in variation into a

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prestige previously enjoyed only by Westerners. For an interesting account of the relationship between Japanese “science” and Japanese imperialism more generally, see Tomiyama Ichirō, “Colonialism and the Sciences of the Tropical Zone: The Academic Analysis of Difference in the ‘Island Peoples’” *Positions* 3, no. 2: 367-391.

pathetic and equally large collection of different and consistently inferior versions of one and the same true Buddhism.

Such processes were literally and materially linked to imperialism. One of the foundational moments in the modern construction of Buddhism transpired when a British East India company agent residing in Katmandu in the early nineteenth century came across certain Sanskrit manuscripts. He forwarded them to the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, the Royal Asiatic Society of London, and the Societe Asiatique of Paris. Nothing much came of the Calcutta and London documents, but philologist Eugene Burnhouf acquired the Paris shipment. Burnhouf was the mentor of one of the most important early science of religion scholars, Orientalists, and Buddhologists, F. Max Muller. Burnhouf was among the first Europeans to recognize the apparent sameness of what we now call the Buddhism of Tibet, Mongolia, China, and Ceylon. He was also among the first to argue that since the Buddhisms of these various nations had a common origin in India, one ought to primarily study Sanskrit documents of Indian origin.[32]

One face of modernity, then, is the imposition of conceptual systems tending toward entropically determined identities: all forms of degenerate Buddhism are Buddhism, however degenerate

[32] Masuzawa, 125-6.

particular cases may be, and all world religions are indeed religions. They are also hierarchically arranged to be sure. From the standard Western perspective Christianity is clearly superior to Buddhism and Islam, but they are all categorically reduced to religion, abstracted from diverse histories and experiences. Also, because it is Protestantism that eschews the religiosity of everyday life above all that modern thought models its general conception of religion upon, we have come to increasingly identify generalized, homogenized forms of religion as separate from everyday life, as something that one does on one day of the week and forgets about for the rest of mundane existence.[33].

What I am calling this face of modernity, in turn, corresponds with imperialism as a system imposing order upon more heterogeneous collectivities. This imperialism itself, furthermore, is not something that takes place only in colonies. It takes place in the heart of the metropole. Nation-states were formed through processes similar to those that formed both Buddhism and world religions, because the nationalism too privileged an abstractly defined homogeneity—in language, race, culture—over a lived, material heterogeneity.

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[33] On the topic of the formation of what many scholars term "Protestant Buddhism," for example, see King, especially, 149-152.

The abstraction of religious forms from lived experience and the packaging of them as religion also corresponds with the way that capitalist exchange brings heterogeneous labor and capital into isomorphic relations through the intermediary of money as a general medium of exchange. It does not matter who produces a commodity or where a commodity is produced, nor does it matter who consumes where. Money and the global marketplace have at least since the nineteenth century generated a system in which the kinds of uneven and unequal social, political, economic, and cultural relations Conrad evokes have been increasingly generally possible.

Capitalist and imperialist modernity continually homogenizes the heterogeneous and this is not simply analogous with the processes that constructed Buddhism, and the various nations across the planet. It is one and the same process. However, the homogenization of the heterogeneous at the global level of academic or elite discourse in the realm of concepts or the global market in the economic realm does not eliminate heterogeneity. Just as the "sepulchral" cities of nineteenth-century Europe were in a dependent relationship with the very different realms of colonized spaces and populations, the homogenizing processes of elite conceptualizations of culture on the one hand, and global capital accumulation on the other, are each

dependent upon and in a relationship with processes that exceed them.

Deleuze and Guattari conceive of the economic and non-economic relationships I am describing in terms of axioms versus codes. For them, axiomatic logic characterizes modern, capitalist societies and the logic of codes characterizes non-modern, non-capitalist societies. "The axiomatic deals directly with purely functional elements and relations whose nature is not specified …. [C]odes, on the other hand, are relative to those domains and express specific relations between qualified elements …."[34] For example, in medieval and ancient Japan certain communities were responsible for providing the imperial household with particular products, such as sea bream or textiles. This was a coded relationship because of the specificity involved. It differs from the axiomatic, modern situation in which people pay taxes in money that homogenously represents value in an abstract way, a way that has only tenuous relationships with the heterogeneous and concrete ways value is generated.

Eugene W. Holland describes the differences between axioms and codes in the following way:

> [Coding] depends upon custom—on symbolic systems of conduct, meaning, and belief. Axioms, by contrast,

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[34] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi Trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 454.

> directly join together heterogeneous flows of matter or energy that have been quantified. Axiomatization not only does not depend on meaning, belief, and custom, but actively defies and subverts them, giving capitalism its distinctive dynamism and modernism. Quantified flows under capitalism get conjoined solely on the estimation that this or that conjunction will produce surplus-value …. [T]he qualities attributable to axiomatized flows *arise from* the conjunction itself, rather than pre-existing it: in commodity-production and consumption, the qualities of the product ("use-values"), as well as the qualities with which the consumer is endowed by consuming it ("taste"), and also the qualities of the labor-power ("skills") and of the capital invested in machinery ("technologies") required to produce it—all depend on the conjunctions effected … in the market via the medium of money as abstract universal equivalent.[35]

Because with axioms nothing qualitative is necessarily specified but everything is reduced to the quantitative, with capitalist relations of exchange or debt and modern social structures there is a great deal of flexibility and freedom. This flexibility allows the conjunction of the superficially contradictory—such as Africa and Belgium during the age of high imperialism—while preventing homogenization, which allows us to pretend that such things are not in a real and necessary relationship.[36]

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[35] Holland, 66-7.

[36] For more on axioms and codes see Ibid., 453-473; Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, especially, 244-262 and 335-337; Fredric Jameson, "Marxism and Dualism in Deleuze," in *A Deleuzian Century?* ed. Ian Buchanan (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 17-22; Holland, especially, 66-68; and Alberto Toscano, "Axiomatic," in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 17-18.

The axiomatic ordering of the heterogeneous modern world has traditionally allowed us to believe in modernization as a process leading to perpetually greater rationality, prosperity, and both technological and social development, because it occludes the necessary relationship between the impressive development of some aspects of metropolitan civilization on the one hand, and the ruin of most aspects of imperialized societies on the other. The interrelationship between those supposedly at the vanguard of modernization—defined characteristically as rational, White, male, heterosexual, and bourgeois—and those defined otherwise is all the more cruel (and complex) because processes of capital accumulation not only tolerate heterogeneity within modernity as a global system, they encourage it because "in its perpetual search for new sources of profit, capitalism continually axiomatizes other qualitatively dissimilar resource flows, transforming them into quantitatively exchangeable commodities on the market: flows of raw materials and labor skills, to be sure, but also of scientific knowledge, consumer preferences, and so on."[37] The conspicuous role of "Communist" nation-states' (inexpensive) labor in the current global capitalist economy well exemplifies capitalism's ability to appropriate the dissimilar.

[37] Holland, 67.

Taking such contradictory matters into account, it becomes increasingly difficult to understand the workings of modernity. Brian Massumi tries to overcome such obstacles by conceptualizing two tendencies within modern societies, each of which are impossible to realize: he identifies a drive towards entropy—"understanding" and fixing everything once and for all—with the pole of "fascism-paranoia" and the drive towards the dissolution of all form with the pole of "anarchy-schizophrenia." For Massumi absolutely victorious fascism-paranoia would absolutely mean death, and he is right, but absolute anarchy-schizophrenia would be a kind of death as well—one is either frozen to death or shattered into innumerable pieces. Modernity means living in the zone between these two forms of death. [38]

Massumi argues that twin tendencies towards fascism-paranoia and anarchy-schizophrenia coexist in social organizations at every level, from the individual to the national or international.[39] Nichirenism, and its particular manifestations such as the person of Tanaka Chigaku or his Kokuchūkai organization also contain, are composed by, these twin tendencies. This explains why and how Chigaku could have offered his readers and listeners the absolute freedom of union with the eternal, original Buddha, which suggests

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[38] Massumi, 116-17.
[39] Ibid.

the dissolution of all form, all difference, all duality, and all hierarchy, on the one hand, while on the other hand he could also be in full support of the modern Japanese, imperialist nation-state, with all the hierarchy and differentiation on an international and national level that entailed. Chigaku gave his audiences the feeling that impossibilities are possible and Nichirenism in general functioned as an imaginary resolution to basic and inescapable contradictions of the modern milieu, such as that between the dream of unlimited accumulation and its impossibility, that between the approximation of political equality and economic unevenness, or that between nationalism and democracy.

Nichirenism & Modernity

Nichirenism must be understood as a species of what Donald Lopez has defined as a specifically modern Buddhism.[40] Its basis, its structure, was not that of coding and cyclicality. Nichirenism and its adherents never repudiated the progressive temporality of the modern. They did make use of an idiom connected to premodern understandings of time and cosmology with the idea of *mappō*, but a mixed temporality in which futurism characterizes the modern more than anything else. Nichirenism's focus remained a compensatory

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[40] See Lopez's editor's "Introduction" to *Modern Buddhism: Readings for the Unenlightened* (New York: Penguin, 2002), especially, xli.

future. In this dissertation's final chapter, my interpretation of the life and thought of Ishiwara Kanji will make this point clear. But even more fundamentally, the much earlier thought of Tanaka Chigaku, circa the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, embedded Nichirenism as a discourse within modern times. In those early years Chigaku unequivocally embraced the decoding tendencies of the modern and this embrace had first of all to do with his renunciation of clerical status.

Chigaku's decision to become a layman stemmed from his frustration with Nichirenshū sectarian orthodoxy during the Meiji period (1868-1912). The sect's policy was accommodation and compromise with other religious persuasions. As part of the premodern Tokugawa state's attempt to police the archipelago all individuals throughout the country were registered with given temples, and they were by law not allowed to change their religious affiliation. In that context, Nichirenshū leaders resigned themselves to the futility of proselytizing. The Tokugawa system was a coded one par excellence. However, the Meiji state abolished the rigidity of the Tokugawa system through various reforms, including the establishment of religious freedom.[41]

[41] Jaffe, 195. Note: Nichirenshū is one of several traditional sects of Nichiren Buddhism. It was the sect operating the Nichiren Daikyōin.

Chigaku entered the Nichiren Daikyōin (Nichiren Great Academy) in 1870. As a Nichirenshū priest-in-training there, Chigaku apparently realized something his teachers did not, that with religious freedom the rationale for accommodating the religious beliefs of others disappeared. To be sure, Chigaku saw the emphasis on aggressive proselytizing that he adopted as a return to the origins of his sect, a return to the teachings of Nichiren. Nonetheless, he simultaneously embraced a situation in which the solid was melting into air. As a young man he grew to increasingly favor the abolition of the codes of the old system. These codes had been designed to prevent change of any kind, and only their dissolution made the imagination of a new and better future possible. The first instance of his Chigaku's pronounced repudiation of coding occurred when he became a layman. In other words, when he left the priesthood Chigaku began a rejection of tradition and an infatuation with the modern that would characterize the rest of his life.

Chigaku's laicization in 1879 at the age of nineteen led to his formation of three lay societies in turn: the Rengekai (Lotus Flower Society) in 1881, the Risshō Ankokukai (Rectification of Justice and Protection of the Nation Society) in 1885, and the Kokuchūkai (National Pillar Society) in 1914. The year after formally leaving the seminary Chigaku got married. His renunciation of clerical status

was deeply related to his attitudes regarding marriage. Soon after becoming a layman Chigaku still hoped to renovate the Nichirenshū sect. In this context Chigaku became one of modern Japan's earliest advocates of marriage for Buddhist clergy. But by the first decade of the twentieth century Chigaku had completely abandoned the idea of clerical marriage. Instead he began denouncing the Buddhist priesthood altogether. In so doing he embraced a completely lay religiosity that left the old codes and the traditional Buddhist establishment behind.[42]

Chigaku had a solid logical foundation supporting his views on marriage, the Buddhist establishment, and lay religiosity. He called attention to the fact that in the Meiji Period clerics had lost the special status they enjoyed during the Tokugawa Period. In Japanese the word *shukke* (one who leaves home) signifies the status of priest or monk, whereas *zaike* (one who resides in the home) refers to laymen. Chigaku noted, however, that in the modern period priests and monks did not leave behind the quotidian world signified by the home. The Meiji state required clergy to retain family names, register at the offices of local government with those names, and make themselves available for conscription. In short, the state treated the clergy as legally identical with every other citizen. At first Chigaku

[42] Jaffe, 185.

argued that there was no logical reason why religious professionals should not marry. Later he would come to argue that priests or monks as such no longer even existed. His views on marriage were related to his apotheosis of the nuclear family. He saw this as consistent with Buddhist notions regarding the sanctification of the even the most mundane of life's elements. But his interpretation of Buddhist doctrine also buttressed the primacy of the family as the last bastion of "natural" social hierarchy in the context of capitalist modernity's tendency to liquidate the stability of codes.[43]

As part of his valorization of marriage and the nuclear family Chigaku created one of the earliest Buddhist wedding ceremonies in Japan. In these ceremonies Chigaku utilized the trappings of Nichiren Buddhism in novel ways, for example, performing the ceremony in front of a calligraphic representation of the *daimoku* called a *honzon* (object of worship), and instructing the bride and groom to chant the *daimoku*. The extended family attended and witnessed, but did not participate. The most remarkable element of Chigaku's Buddhist wedding ceremony was "the extent to which the extended family is moved from the center stage. The parents of the bride and groom have become members of the audience, along with

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[43] Ibid., 187.

more-distant relations and friends. Only the leader, the bride and groom, and the go-betweens actually are engaged in the ceremony."[44]

As Richard Jaffe's study of modern Buddhism and clerical marriage makes clear, we can link Chigaku's concern with the nuclear family to the late-nineteenth-century milieu, in which Japanese modernizers influenced by Christianity and the newly empowered bourgeoisie were popularizing the ideal of the conjugal home of the nuclear family (*katei* 家庭 in Japanese or *hōmu* ホーム in Japanized English), as superior to the extended household (*ie* 家 in Chinese ideographs). "According to its proponents, the home consisted of the married couple and their children living as a self-contained unit in isolation from the extended family and such non-family members as servants and workers. While the *ie* was old-fashioned, Chinese, and anti-industrial, the *katei* was modern, Western, and the family unit best suited for Japan's industrial transformation."[45]

Chigaku promised to break all of the old codes of the premodern, pre-capitalist milieu, and his real or imagined relationship with Nichiren and the Buddha resided in the fact that Chigaku believed that breaking all such codes, and becoming what from

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[44] Ibid, 172-3.
[45] Ibid, 172.

another perspective might be called truly modern, was the latent promise of both Buddhism and Nichiren.[46] It is remarkable that Chigaku even found and emphasized a doctrine of male-female equality in the *Lotus Sūtra* in an episode within the text wherein a female becomes a Buddha. But as Jaffe points out, Chigaku failed to mention that in the sutra the "dragon girl" who becomes a Buddha must first transform into a male.[47] In other words, Chigaku produced a strained interpretation of the *Lotus* in order to make it cohere with a progressive position on gender.

However radical or even egalitarian some of Chigaku's discourse may have been, he inevitably returned to an axiomatic recoding. He promised ineffable communion with the eternal, original Buddha and corollaries for this included celebrating freedom from the rigidities of the Tokugawa period, along with calling for the

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[46] Thus there is similarity between Nichirenism and the more general phenomenon of modern Buddhism, meaning such Modern Buddhism as that of the "Zen Master," Suzuki Daisetz (D. T. Suzuki), Japanese Orientalist scholars of Buddhism, and Buddhist figures in other parts of Asia. There was a trend among such modern Buddhists to see in Buddhism a philosophy or mode of experience at the avant-garde of progress—meaning that Buddhism was more rational than other religions, Christianity in particular, and that in the case of Japan, the country that had received the Enlightenment in one sense from the West, could return "enlightenment" in an equally rational but spiritualized form. See Stone, "Interwar Buddhist Studies," 227. See also Donald S. Lopez, editor's "Introduction" to *Modern Buddhism*; and Robert Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," in *Curators of the Buddha*.

[47] Jaffe, 181, Note 39.

dissolution of hierarchical relationships between men and women. However, Chigaku's teachings also rhetorically promoted the retention of certainties that promised to stabilize experience in the face of the ceaseless change characterizing modern life. For example, as some of his writings make clear, he believed in the equality between women and men in theory, but at the practical level the roles for women in the ideal society he envisioned were "separate but equal," which as always meant not really equal after all.[48]

Chigaku turned to the nuclear family as what appears to be a natural hierarchy even in the context of industrial capitalism and its dislocations. He then used the family as a model for all social structures. In a lecture that Chigaku gave for the Meiji Emperor and Empress on their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in 1894 Chigaku made the following propositions:

> Father and son, lord and vassal. All human ethics arises from the husband-wife relationship. It is the beginning and end of human ethics. It is the basis of social interaction. … If there are male and female but they are not combined together into a conjugal couple, then the vigorous and vital secret creative power of heaven cannot function. Men and women cannot be properly ordered. The mind cannot be pacified. The body cannot be subdued. The ordering of the family, the ruling of the nation, and the pacification of the realm cannot occur. That is to say, society cannot be maintained.[49]

[48] Ibid, 188.
[49] Translation is Jaffe's, 182.

In short, for Chigaku the husband-wife relationship was axiomatic, and the always already given hierarchy it signified functioned at the microcosmic level of the nuclear family and at the macrocosmic level of the nation-state, in which the national family (*kazoku kokka*) corresponds with the body politic (*kokutai*) as an unquestionable set of givens. Chigaku ultimately subordinated everything to the nation as the axiomatic proposition above all others.

In mathematics axioms delimit realms of possibility because they are not themselves questionable and yet they provide a basis for operations that would otherwise not be possible. The twin ideas of the nation and the family are similar. For one thing, the nation as axiomatic bedrock of modern societies makes possible the perpetuation of fundamental social contradictions such as those between people who have wealth and power and those who do not. Nationalism informs us that "we" are all "in it together," and that those who have less wealth and power than others are the nation-as-family's equivalent of children. Nichirenism as a supplement to the nation (and by extension the more-or-less smooth continuation of capital accumulation) promised only imaginary or short-term resolutions to the fundamental contradictions of modern life.

For these reasons it is not surprising that Nichirenists such as Ishiwara would have been involved in what others termed an

attempted overcoming of modernity, one that merely reproduced the problems purportedly to be overcome, such as imperialism as a corollary of industrial "success." Imperialism too was and is only a temporary "fix" (as David Harvey puts it) for the endemic crises of industrial capitalist modernity.[50] But as with liberalism, Nichirenism in general and Ishiwara in particular dealt with the fundamental differences between expectation and experience by consigning modernity's utopian promises to an ever receding horizon in the indefinite future, a future that nonetheless justified much sacrifice for oneself and others in the experiential present. However, as Georges Bataille argued in many of his works, there is in sacrifice an expenditure that is more than an unfortunate byproduct of a social formation's shortcomings. It can become an end in itself.

The Limits of Modernity? The Limits of Nichirenism?

As a young man Egawa Chūji (1905-1938) developed an interest in Nichirenism through his exposure to the writings of Takayama Chogyū.[51] Along with the socialist Nichirenist Seno'o Girō, who is the subject of this work's third chapter and Inoue Nisshō Egawa also

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[50] David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (New York: Verso, 1999), 441-45.

[51] On Egawa's reading of Chōgyū see Hosaka Masayasu, *Shinōdan jiken: gunkokushugika no kyōshin to dan'atsu* [The let's die incident: fanaticism and oppression under militarism] (Tokyo: Renga Shobō, 1972), pp. 33-4. Hosaka's book is the only extensive study of the *Shinōdan Jiken* of which I am aware and almost all of what I know about the incident is included in Hosaka's work.

frequently visited the headquarters of Honda Nisshō. In 1925 Egawa formed the Nichiren Kai (Nichiren Association) as a study group that would also preach in front of train stations in the Tokyo region. Members would dress completely in black, beating drums and hoisting a banner proclaiming that their focus was a simple faith in Nichiren and his teachings. By 1931 they had 500 members.

In 1933 Egawa changed the name of the Nichiren Kai's youth group from the Nichiren Kai Seinenbu (Nichiren Society Youth Section) to the Nichiren Kai Junkyō Shū Seinentō (Nichiren Society Mass Martyrdom Youth Party, henceforth Martyrdom Youth). Before the formation of the Martyrdom Youth, Egawa had already begun to emphasize Nichiren's doctrine of "not caring about one's own body or life" (*fushaku shinmyō*), which in Nichiren's context referred to literally giving one's all for the sake of the salvation of the world through disseminating his version of Buddhism. Nichiren combined Māhayana Buddhist altruism with the Buddhist teaching that the self as a discreet being in a dualistic relationship with other phenomena is an illusion.

During the first month of 1933, Chūji articulated the importance of *fushaku shinmyō* in a manifesto that he distributed to the 28 young people who would become members of the Martyrdom Youth: "Let's die for our homeland (*sokoku*)! Let's die for our

principle (*shugi*)! Let's die for our religion! Let's die for our founder! Let's die for our comrades!"[52] The activities and ideas of Egawa's group aroused the condemnation of the media, and both the surveillance and persecution of the police, causing the Martyrdom Youth to lose most of its membership. Events of ensuing years such as the Ketsumeidan Incident and the February 1936 incident only made matters worse.

By 1936 Egawa and his fellow martyrs resolved to die in order to awaken contemporary Japanese society to what they perceived as the truth. They initially chose the method of starvation, but problems with the disposal of bodies caused by one-by-one death through starvation forced them to discontinue the practice and to advocate death by suicidal disembowelment (*seppuku*). However, at the same time some members of the Martyrdom Youth had misgivings about dying. Egawa responded by convincing five of them to commit *seppuku* in public, but without dying. Each of the five simultaneously appeared in front of the Diet Building, the residence of the foreign minister, the Imperial Palace, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police headquarters, and the Home Ministry, where they chanted "let's die, let's die, let's die," and stuck swords into their abdomens. Nobody perished. The next year Egawa died from

[52] Hosaka, 111.

tuberculosis, three female members who attended him subsequently killed themselves with poison, one male follower ended his own life by self-disembowelment, and another male member of Egawa's group drowned himself in the sea.[53]

Bataille associated religious experiences of divinity's immanence with what he called an "intimate order."[54] This was for him a realm of continuity between subject and object, between humanity and the universe. He furthermore correlated this sacred mode of experience with the world of animals that humanity left behind when it began to use tools. He contrasted intimacy with what he called the "order of things."[55] This realm of things, for Bataille, was one in which people and other sentient and insentient entities are reduced to discontinuous objects. For him this was a fallen or degraded situation in which "man himself became" merely "one of the things of the world."[56] Despite points in his work where he connects "things" to the "commodity,"[57] Bataille usually seems to ahistorically define religiosity, as when he states in both the first

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[53] For my synopsis of events surrounding the Shinōdan Jiken, I partially relied upon a brief account included in *Nichiren no hon: mappō no yo o utsu* Nichiren's Book: A Prophecy fired at the World of Mappō) (Tokyo: Gakken, 2001), 162-3. .
[54] Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share,* vol. *1: Consumption*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 59.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 57.
[57] Ibid.,132.

volume of *The Accursed Share* and in *Theory of Religion* that, universally, religion is a "search for lost intimacy."[58] For Bataille, the means employed towards the end of a return to intimacy differ according to historical context, yet he celebrated less modern practices such as sacrifice and mysticism most of all, bemoaning the fact that for him intimacy was all but lost in modern times.

A more historicized version of Bataille's theory of religion may provide insight into the meaning of events such as the "Let's Die Incident," as well as that particular event's relationship with Nichirenism as a whole. Chigaku and other, more "normal," Nichirenists reduced what they privileged first and foremost—religion, Buddhism, the nation, the emperor, even the cosmic Buddha—to "things." The axiomatic logic of the modernity they enthusiastically accepted conceptually forestalled apprehension of a heterogeneity exceeding simple ways of defining such entities.

Nichirenism promised the delivery of what Bataille would call "intimacy" or "immanence," but that was a promise that I would argue remained always forthcoming. Again, this is structurally

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[58] Georges Bataille, *Theory of Religion*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 57. Cf., *Accursed Share*, 57. Here Bataille characterizes humanity's "strange myths" and "cruel rites" as evidence that "man is *in search of a lost intimacy* from the first." "Religion," he continues in the next paragraph is this long effort and this anguished quest: It is always a matter of detaching from the *real* order, from the poverty of *things*, and destroying the *divine* order.

related to the temporality, the perpetual “not yet,” of liberalism. Liberalism and Nichirenism also structurally cohere with the deferred gratification, the famous (Protestant) asceticism, that is inextricable from “normal” capital accumulation. Promised gratification may be deferred by choice—because, for example, one may prefer investing in the future—or it may be deferred involuntarily because no gratification is actually forthcoming anyway. The salient point at this juncture is that in the face of the temporality of the modern, refusal to be patient— refusing to wait for gratification, even development, world unification, or communion with the immanence of the Buddha that is also the cessation of oppressive hierarchy—may often take the form of a refusal to live as life is conventionally defined. Refusal to live as conventionally defined might itself take many forms, most of them tragic perhaps, and the Let’s Die Incident was an example of one of them.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that each social formation has something called antiproduction built into it. By this they mean that for the most part, historically, societies have been much more concerned with social discipline than any potential lack of goods and resources. Because of this, according to them, all social formations have organized the destruction of goods and resources in such a way that their over-accumulation does not threaten the social “balance.”

They argue that in non-modern societies antiproduction was either integrated into a ritual calendar featuring carnivalesque orgies of wasteful consumption, or it was built into a tributary system in which surplus transformed into gold eventually found its way into the bottomless treasuries of despots. With capitalism and its axiomatic organization of society, however, such things become impossible—festivals and tributary economies require believability.[59]

David Harvey calls antiproduction occurring in the capitalist milieu the devaluation of capital (including money, commodities, and labor). Harvey, drawing from Marx's *Capital*, argues that the extreme efficiency of capitalist economies leads to overproduction, leading to insufficient markets for commodities produced and concomitant economic crises, which themselves lead to social and political crises. His model case is the Great Depression, and both he and Deleuze and Guattari note that policies such as the new deal or Keynesianism in the US and attempts at regional autarky in Europe and Asia were "fixes" that did not work. The only effective solution for the Depression, they argue, was the Second World War, with its massive destruction and resultant clean slate for the US to carve out a new kind of global hegemony. This hegemony was one in which social equilibrium in the "first" world was maintained by the hyper-

[59] For a good summary of the workings of antiproduction according to Deleuze and Guattari, see Holland, 58-78.

exploitation of the "third," a neo-imperialist exploitation made all the more palatable (and crueler) because of its non-codified informality. Postwar capitalist modernity also ensured the perpetuation of social equilibrium through devaluation/antiproduction concomitant with the "unsuccessful" wars pursued by the United States as "police actions" and undeclared wars in Korea and Vietnam.[60]

I am not claiming the existence of ongoing conspiracies perpetrated by, for example, a military-industrial complex, nor do I believe in the automatic and smooth-running social "functionalism" of an antiproduction-production system per se. The role of the aleatory, on the other hand, cannot be underestimated. As insurance companies know, we have little idea who will or will not lose their lives in automobile accidents in a given year, but this does not reduce the calculability of the approximate numbers of those who will.[61] Moreover, economic crises are inevitable outcomes of the over-accumulation of capital, which does not mean that such crises—or the imperialist wars national leaders turn to in order to deliver us from them—are planned. Figures like Chigaku, Anesaki, and Miyazawa

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[60] For the devaluation of capital see especially Harvey, *The Limits*, 425-442; for anti-production see Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 335-337; for the historical function of the second World War vis-à-vis the Great Depression and the postwar settlement see *A Thousand Plateaus*, 461-3 and Harvey 442-445.

[61] Lefebvre, 204.

did not cause the Let's Die Incident, but they produced and were part of a discourse that gave rise to it.

Nichirenism as a whole stimulated antiproduction. While its more moderate participants such as Chigaku and Anesaki maintained a distance from illicit violence, Chigaku flirted with a radical dissolution of "things." Ultimately the supreme beings (nation, Emperor, Buddha) that he venerated above all as agents of the transformation of the world into something more "intimate" were themselves "things" nonetheless. A fundamental irony obscures the relationship between events like the Let's Die Incident and the Nichirenism of Chigaku and Anesaki: Buddhism and the nation as abstract entities formed through a process denying the heterogeneity of lived experience constituted part of the problem of modern existence, not the solution, and yet Egawa and his followers never imagined destroying the realistic facades of those "things." Instead their desire for an apparently lost intimacy led to them destroying themselves. As for more "normal" Nichirenism it "worked" within the confines of acceptable discourse and behavior, as long as utopian impossibility could be endlessly deferred to the indefinite future.

Moreover, as articulated by Maruyama, the "fascism from below" of the Shōwa Restoration's radical Nichirenism was integral to development of "fascism from above," which for him was

shorthand for the conservative forces that capitalized on 1930s terrorism in Japan. The Let's Die Incident had a similar function. Signifying nihilism with their well-publicized suicides, along with other Nichirenist terrorists, the Martyrdom Youth helped prepare Japan for mass commitment to an apparently meaningful and equally self-effacing national mission: the defeat of Western imperialism. Maruyama's discussion of the two fascisms anticipated the dichotomy discussed by Massumi as "fascism-paranoia" and "anarchy-schizophrenia."

If Maruyama got something wrong regarding such questions, however, it was in the way he misrecognized how the two poles of modern society are so often present in one and the same entity, as was the case with Nichirenism, Nichirenist organizations, and Nichirenists. The threads binding the apparently contradictory in the modern are axiomatic. It was more form than content, and because of this it was as indifferent to particular meanings as money linked to the purchase of any particular commodity. The meaning of Nichirenism was not as important as the latent potentials that could be actualized in its name at any given moment: for example, as a Miyazawa poem, as an Anesaki biography of Nichiren, or as the Let's Die Incident. Nevertheless, Nichirenism of all types embodied the desire to overcome or escape modern life, which was futile because at

its most fundamental level, as with the temporality of modernity in general, Nichirenism proposed an imminent meeting with an immanent utopia that remained only possible in an imaginary future. In other words Nichirenism was a part of modernity, not antithetical to it.

The "horror" of modern life begins with the recognition that threads indeed connect our own experience—and from a "first world" perspective, our privilege—to more unsavory realities and practices. In scholarly discourse to date, Nichirenism in its totality has constituted a threat to our collective desire to maintain an "order of things" conceptually separating "us" from "them," "liberals" from "fascists," and "good" from "evil." I believe that relations between these hierarchically opposed binary terms are a great deal more intimate than most people commonly suppose. I furthermore believe that the only way to connect with a meaningful and politically hopeful experiential present is to stop misrecognizing this fact. As Lefebvre suggested, orthodox historiography has often functioned as a "strange ceremony" that "is like a ritual … of purification,"[62] designed consciously or unconsciously to conjure away the horror accompanying recognition that "we" are not so different from

[62] Lefebvre, 225.

"them." Whatever its shortcomings the present work attempts to do otherwise.

Rationale of Chapters that Follow

From the start I have intended for this dissertation to juxtapose the Nichirenist elements that writers seem so reluctant to place side-by-side with one another. I chose to focus on four individuals who best exemplify the range of Nichirenism. As my research developed and as I began to write, I realized that Chigaku was Nichirenism's seminal figure, and that he planted what one might call the seeds of Nichirenism in the wide variety of followers that I have already mentioned, and the chapters that follow are arranged accordingly.

Chapter one is on Chigaku himself. In this chapter I devise an interpretive logic that accounts for his charisma. I make the case that his charisma was not because of his message but because of he essentially lacked one. He was a master at wielding the empty words that are the ideological powerhouses of modernity. For example, in our contemporary milieu political figures can use the word "freedom" without reference to its content. It has become an empty shell of a concept because nobody would dare to be against freedom. Asking what it means is in effect taboo. Chigaku's use of language was analogous wit this. His charisma largely arose from the fact that his

audiences could supply content their own content to his messages. This content expressed their own desires, and I believe that this accounts for the diversity of manifestations of Nichirenism.

Chapter two addresses Miyazawa Kenji. I argue that he actualized Chigaku's discourse in a particular way, as did the two other major foci of this dissertation. Miyazawa created a utopian literature, one that broke down the barriers between the hierarchically arranged binary oppositions that compose modern commonsense. I love his work. However, when Miyazawa attempted to actualize that utopianism in the material world by leading a farmers' cooperative organization, the result was unsuccessful. In chapter two I attempt to discern why that was the case.

In chapter three I examine the thought and career of Seno'o Girō. Of all the figures in my work, he was the one least connected to Chigaku. Nonetheless, in his youth he read Chigaku's work and it deeply inspired him. Later he joined a rival Nichirenist faction that was standard insofar as it was supportive of the liberal capitalist status quo, the Japanese nation, and the imperialist project. Seno'o soon formed a Nichirenist youth group and served as its leader. Later, following the Japanese expansion into northeastern China discussed below, he reversed course, becoming opposed to imperialism and what he called Japanese fascism. He then forged

what he called Buddhist Socialism. Because of his radical transformation Seno'o's biography indicates how far Nichirenism could go in directions antithetical to what seem like its fundamental premises.

Chapter four focuses on Ishiwara Kanji. Ishiwara was deeply impressed with the thought of Chigaku, and for that reason he formally joined the Kokuchūkai in 1920, as did Miyazawa. Ishiwara's mode of actualizing Nichirenism's promise however was more this worldly, and more violent. He was the main conspirator behind the Manchurian Incident in 1931, when the Japanese army exploded a section of the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railway and blamed it on Chinese bandits. They then used that "false flag" incident as a pretext for the takeover of a large section of northeastern China, setting up a Japanese controlled puppet-state. Ishiwara was driven to undertake these activities by his desire to facilitate and help win a Last War between an Asia led by Japan and a West led by the United States. He sincerely believed that this Last War—which he did not confuse with the actual World War II—would usher in an epoch of peace and endless progress.

Lastly, I use the word "modernism" in my title to describe Nichirenism. Despite a plethora of meanings frequently attached to the term, I see it first of all as a word signifying the variety of avant-

garde movements in literary and other arts during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including Dadaism, Expressionism and Abstract Expressionism, Futurism, and the literature of Joyce, Kafka, and Robert Musil.[63] This entails the notion that modernism challenges the putatively standard rationality of modernity or the human rationality that supposedly increases universally through processes of modernization.[64] I furthermore agree with Harootunian's suggestion that modernism is the cultural supplement of modernity defined as the social, political, and economic milieu of capitalism, and that in this capacity it extends into realms beyond the purely aesthetic—although comparisons between modernist forms of literature and other arts and modernism more generally may be conceptually useful. As Harootunian writes, modernism is the

[63] Various specialized dictionaries define modernism, showing the variety of ways various people have defined it as well as noting specific examples movements labeled as modernist. See for example the entry on the term in J.A. Cudden and CE Pearson, *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 515-516, and David Edwards' definition in *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, Third Edition, ed. Alan Bullock and Stephan Tromley (London: Harper Collins, 2000), 539-540. For an extended introduction to the term's application to a more purely literary field see Randall Stevenson, *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1992), 1-15.
[64] Cf., Louis Sass, *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Sass compares and contrasts the experience of schizophrenics with experience represented in modernist art. His book suggests a dialectical relationship between the rationalizing processes of the modern and the in some ways schizophrenic tendencies of modernism.

"historical watermark" of lived unevenness, and as such it represents strategies and activities that can both celebrate the creative and destructive ceaseless change of the modern, and deplore it, while longingly looking backwards and forwards towards imaginary origins and destinies. Nichirenism is an example of how a modernist movement can express a plurality of such things at once.[65]

[65] Harootunian, *Overcome by*, xx-xxvii.

Chapter One: The Enigma of Tanaka Chigaku

Introduction: A Problem of Classification

"The cat who is the target of the dog's aggression is an aggressor to the mouse. With people as well there are mutually aggressive relations of strength, relations of wealth and relations of knowledge. In the affairs of holy men, in morality, in law and in academia – in all these instances the way one greets opposition has an aggressive character. Aggression is the way the universe works. … However, there is bad aggression and there is good aggression, inferior aggression and superior aggression, mundane aggression and holy aggression. The *Lotus Sūtra* aggression I am referring to now is superior aggression, good aggression, holy aggression …."

Tanaka Chigaku, *Shūmon no ishin*

Tanaka Chigaku titled the compilation of his writings that he published during his lifetime the "collected works of the lion king" (*Shishiō zenshū*). Was he a noble and infinitely compassionate lion king in the manner of the Buddha or a fierce practitioner of the Buddhism of the *Lotus Sūtra*,[1] or was he an ultranationalist, fascist and/or militarist? For scholarship during most of the postwar period

[1] See Ishida Mizumaro, *Reibun Bukkyōgo daijiten* [Great dictionary of Buddhist terms with examples) (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1997], 425 for *shishi* as Buddha. According to *Honge seiten daijirin* [Great dictionary of our sect's sacred texts] (Tokyo: Shishiōbunko, 1963 (1923)), vol. 3, 6371, a three volume reference work compiled under Chigaku's direction, however, a *shishiō* is one who personally exemplifies traits valued within the Nichiren tradition among common people, and one with a *shishiō no kokoro* or "lion heart" exemplifies the courage of the votary or practitioner of the (principles/teachings o the) *Lotus Sūtra*, a.k.a., Nichiren.

Chigaku has represented a problem of classification.[2] In this chapter, I will argue that the difficult to classify nature of Chigaku demonstrated his most essential and appealing qualities. In other words, the vacancy or evasiveness of Chigaku's Nichirenism discourse fueled it as a mobilizing force. The vacancy or evasiveness at the movement's core also explains why Nichirenism as a movement had an uncommonly diverse set of manifestations.

The Religious Studies scholar Satō Hiroo has placed Chigaku in of the first of a three-part division of modern Nichirenism, a movement as a whole that Chigaku inaugurated with his invention of the neologism, *Nichirenshugi* (Nichirenism). Chigaku first used the term in a seminal set of journal articles that became the 1901 extended essay, *The Renovation of Our Sect* (*Shūmon no ishin*).[3] Satō's tripartite scheme for begins with Nichirenism as a nationalistic and right wing movement. This first category includes Chigaku, Ishiwara Kanji, and Inoue Nisshō. Satō's second category is Nichirenism as a nation-state-transcending movement attempting to construct a global universalism grounded in the *Lotus Sūtra* and

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[2] I am following Ōtani's convention in abbreviating Tanaka Chigaku in this way, making this choice because "Tanaka" is one of the most common Japanese names and "Chigaku" [wisdom and learning], the name he gave himself is uncommonly singular. Thus I will avoid confusion with others named Tanaka, including the various descendents of Chigaku who have been active leaders and writers in the Nichirenism movement.

[3] Ōtani, 15, 69.

Nichiren's teachings. This group includes Miyazawa Kenji, Takayama Chogyū, and Seno'o Girō. Satō's third category is Nichirenism as a "new religion" focused on the concerns of common people. This third category includes primarily postwar lay organizations such as Soka Gakkai and Risshō Kōseikai.[4]

The problem with these categories is that not only were Takayama and Miyazawa moved to become Nichirenists directly through exposure to Chigaku's writings and personality, Miyazawa and Ishiwara both enthusiastically joined Chigaku's organization, the *Kokuchūkai* in the same year (1920).[5] Even the Socialist Seno'o read a number of Chigaku's works and at one point fervently desired his tutelage. Moreover, the Reiyūkai was a lay group with spiritualist leanings founded by Kubo Kakutarō, a man who "had been influenced by the Nichirenist ideas of Tanaka Chigaku" in the 1920s, and Kubo's group at one time included the founders of Risshō Kōseikai and most of the several other Nichirenist new religions, with the exception of Soka Gakkai.[6] I would add that calling postwar

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[4] Tamura Yoshirō, "Kindai Nihon no Ayumi to Nichirenshugi," [The development of modern Japan and Nichirenism] in *Kōza Nichiren 4: Nihon kindai to Nichirenshugi* (Nichiren lectures 4: Modern Japan and Nichirenism) ed. Tamura and Miyazawa Eishū (Tokyo: Shinjūsha, 1972), 2-7.
[5] Ōtani, 252.
[6] Robert Kisala, *Prophets of Peace: Pacifism and Cultural Identity in Japan's New Religions* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 103. Makiguchi Tsunesaburō, the founder of Soka Gakkai did

movements such as Soka Gakkai and Risshō Kōseikai "Nichirenist" is problematic because those movements—unlike mostly pre-1945 movement that is the subject of this dissertation—do not use that word to describe themselves.

Historian Kobayashi Hideo on the other hand unhesitatingly regards Chigaku to be a "Shōwa fascist." In what seems to be an elaboration of Maruyama Masao's famous analysis of "fascism from below and "fascism from above," Kobayashi divides Japanese fascists into those concerned with constructing a new system, those who sought the dissolution of the current order, and the technocrats of the period following fascism's systemization.[7] For Kobayashi, Chigaku fits into the *shintaisei kōsakuha* or those concerned with constructing a new system. This group also includes Ishiwara. However, Kobayashi acknowledges the influence of Chigaku over the *genjō hakaiha*, or those concerned with the dissolution of the current order. The latter category includes Inoue Nisshō, a former army spy turned informal Nichiren priest who led a terrorist organization known as the

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for a time attend lectures given by Chigaku however (Ōtani's preface, ii), although the contemporary Soka Gakkai stance is predictably that Makiguchi was neither impressed nor influenced by the experience. See Ikeda Daisaku, "John Dewey and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi: Confluences of thought and Action," eddiv.homestead.com/files/John_Dewey_and_Tsunesaburo_Makiguchi.htm.

[7] Kobayashi Hideo, *Shōwa fashisuto no gunzō* (Portraits of Shōwa fascists) (Tokyo: Kōso Shobō, 1975), 28.

Blood Pledge Corps (Ketsumeidan). The Ketsumeidan infamously murdered politicians and business leaders in a set of 1930s incidents.[8]

Recent scholars such as Ōtani Ei'ichi in his monograph *Kindai Nihon no Nichirenshugi undō* (2001) and Jacqueline Stone in her "Japanese *Lotus* Imperialism: From Militant Nationalism to Contemporary Peace Movements" (2000) wisely avoid facile categorization. However, Ōtani's well-researched and detailed account, over half of which is focused on Chigaku, leaves us wondering what the precise connections were between Chigaku and the imperialism, fascism, and militarism that other writers so often associate with him. Stone is largely correct in her suggestion that differences between postwar Nichiren-based peace movements and the prewar nationalistically and imperialistically oriented Nichirenism of Chigaku can be explained with reference to the divergent contexts of prewar and postwar Japan.[9] In contradistinction to this, I intend to suggest that Chigaku and Nichirenism represent problems integral to the modern world that we still inhabit, instead of a world left behind in 1945.

Chigaku authored an expansive number of publications and gave a similarly voluminous number of lectures. Through them he detailed Nichirenism's role and the role of Japan's national principles

[8] Ibid., 110.
[9] Stone "Japanese *Lotus* Millennialism," 261-280.

or *kokutai* in the reconstruction of the country and Japan's mission to subsequently reconstruct the world. Chigaku expressed the idea of world reconstruction in various phrases he invented or innovatively used modern incarnations. He most consistently termed Nichirenism's and Japan's mission "*sekai tōitsu*," a phrase translatable as "world unification." However, he offered few details of what that phrase's realization would mean.

Any set of answers to the problem of Chigaku should begin with a look at the opening years of the twentieth-century, when he published *Shūmon no ishin*, a relatively short but exceedingly influential work. In a commonly cited passage of *Shūmon*, Chigaku explains that the 13th century monk Nichiren was "the Supreme Commander of the World-Unifying Armed Forces" and that the people of Japan continued to be the "soldiers of Heaven" under his figurative command.[10] The Chigaku of this text expressed aggression and militancy, but the degree to which he meant the text's violent rhetoric to be taken literally is ambiguous. His apparently extreme nationalism seems consistent with the mission-consciousness of

[10] These phrases translated in Ruben L. F. Habito, "The Uses of Nichiren in Modern Japanese History," review article, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 1999 26/3-4. Parts of the same passage are also translated and quoted in Edwin Lee, "Nichiren and Nationalism: The Religious Patriotism of Tanaka Chigaku" *Monumenta Nipponica* vol. 30, no. 1 (1975), p. 26; Stone "Japanese *Lotus* Millennialism," 267-8. Stone uses Lee's translation.

public figures within imperialist nation-states in general. But what he was advocating remains ambiguous because he conflated his ideal Nichirenshū sect—which he wanted to organize like a modern nation-state—with the Japanese nation-state proper. In other words, it is not clear at this point in his career whether he was advocating Japanese nationalism and aggressive imperialism or whether he was indeed advocating the renovation of his sect and its successful global missionary activity. It is worth noting that Chigaku at times defined *sekai tōitsu* in terms such as this: "It definitely does not mean taking over territory with military force." The goal of world unification as he understood it was consistent with peace.[11]

In the following section I will attempt to illustrate the complexities of Chigaku's position on such matters. I will begin to do so by discussing his meeting with a Ceylonese nationalist and religious reformer named Anagarika Dhārmapala (1864-1933). When they met in 1902 they were much in agreement on various matters. Their later reputations would differ greatly. Many would come to think of Dhārmapala as a great man and some would come to call Chigaku a fascist. Later I will discuss how and why Chigaku could affect so many different people in such different ways. These

[11] Tanaka Chigaku, "Hokkekai no shokan" (Impressions of the Hokkekai), *Hokke* [Lotus flower] vol. 5, no. 2 (1915): 39. The Hokkekai [Lotus Society] was a group of Nichirenist intellectuals. Chigaku sometimes published in *Hokke*, their journal.

two themes are connected by the fact that the multiple, varied manifestations of Chigaku's apparent message are grounded in the ambiguity and manifold contradictions of the modern.

The Meeting of Chigaku and Dhārmapala

Chigaku met Dhārmapala in Kamakura Japan. Hagiographical accounts of Chigaku's life often cite this event.[12] Dhārmapala reformed the Ceylon's Buddhism, creating an altogether new form of Buddhism in the process. In this he had much in common with Chigaku. Dhārmapala was both an epigone of the early Theosophy movement and the 1891 founder of the Mahabodhi Society, an international body that at the time remained primarily devoted to ceding the Buddha's birthplace in India to Buddhist control. Dhārmapala also became a minor global celebrity following a speech he gave in English at the World Parliament of Religions at the 1893 Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. Because of his service in the cause of Sri Lankan nationalism, Dhārmapala to this day is a

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[12] See for example the inclusion of "The Visit of Mr. Dhārmapala" [Darumapara shi no raihō] in *Tanaka Chigaku sensei no omoide* [*Memories of the teacher Tanaka Chigaku*], ed. Tanaka Kōho (Tokyo: Shinsekaisha, 1989). The account of the meeting of Chigaku and Dhārmapala included in the 1989 publication was originally published in the journal *Myōhō* in August, 1903.

national hero resembling a Buddhist and Sinhalese version of Gandhi.[13]

Chigaku and Dhārmapala's conversation depended on translation from Dhārmapala's English into Chigaku's Japanese and vice-versa. A disciple of Chigaku's named Yamakawa Chiō subsequently recorded their words in a modern variation of classical Japanese. Yamakawa, Takayama Chōgyū, and others present that day also intermittently participated in the conversation. Yamakawa published the proceedings in *Myōshū*, the organ of Chigaku's Risshō Ankokukai, the Kokuchūkai's precursor. It would be naïve to assume that Yamakawa's Japanese text transparently represents the Dhārmapala's words (or those of anyone else) on that day, but the Dhārmapala represented in the text is consistent with his own writings and existing accounts of the man.[14]

"The Visit of Mr. Dhārmapala" (Darumapara-shi no raihō), as the text is titled is useful here because it introduces Chigaku's ideas and it connects them in context to a world in which Japan's

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[13] See the mention of Dhārmapala on the website of the Sri Lankan embassy to the United States, http://www.slembassyusa.org/srilanka_us_relations/historical_context.html.

[14] See for example Ananda W. P. Gurge, *The Unforgettable Dhārmapala: A Miscellany on the Life and Achievements of the Angarika Dhārmapala (1864-1933)* (Los Angeles: 1st Books Library, 2002) and Donald Lopez, "Introduction" in *Modern Buddhism,* xix-xxi, 54-58.

military, industrial and cultural endeavors were just beginning to challenge the hegemony of the European and American Powers. Crucially, 1902 fell between the Sino-Japanese war (1894-1894) and Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). Those wars coincided with Japan's initial development as an imperialist power. The first resulted in Japan's initial colony, Taiwan, and the second resulted in Japan's growing foothold on the Asian mainland with increasing influence and control over Korea and southern Manchuria. The two wars also first demonstrated the Japanese ability to defeat a much larger nation in the case of China and even a European power in the case of Russia. In this context, "Darumapara-shi" suggests how Chigaku's words and personality could resonate with the concerns of Dhārmapala.

Chigaku and Dhārmapala each confronted a historical commonsense that buttressed Western global supremacy. This supremacy involved the British control of Ceylon, and it was this supremacy that the Japanese nation-state was beginning to challenge with Japan's own successes as an imperialist power. Taking this context into account, Chigaku's novel interpretations of Nichiren's teachings took on contemporary significance. In "Darumapara-shi" Tanaka tells Dhārmapala that:

> The doctrine of Saint Nichiren is truly on the verge of uniting the world. Nichiren taught us "just as it was a

> wonderful thing that the Dhārma of the moon tribe [Indians] came to Japan like the moon moves from east to west, it is also a wonderful thing that the Buddhist Dhārma of Japan [where the sun rises] will replace the Buddhism of the moon tribe.[15]

In Nichiren's own context the logic of this statement was grounded in his thirteenth-century understanding that the demise of the aristocratic Heian government's hegemony within the archipelago during the late 12th century, along with various contemporary natural disasters, indicated that he was living in the third, final and most degraded of periods within Buddhist cosmology, *mappō*.

Nichiren taught that within *mappō* all centers were transformed into peripheries and vice-versa. One of his most innovative tendencies was the degree to which he regarded this situation positively. During Nichiren's age the far-eastern Kantō region that once formed the hinterland of aristocratic, Heian Japan had become the seat of political power at Kamakura and this fit Nichiren's logic vis-à-vis *mappō*. On the one hand, he was able to celebrate his here and now when in the new capital. This celebration of the quotidian present was consistent with and an intensification of a long tradition in Buddhism. But on the other hand, he was from Awa province, a region to the northeast of Kamakura and even further removed from the old capital. Traditionally Nichiren is

[15]Yamakawa Chiō, "Darumapara shi no raihō," 548.

supposed to be the son of a fisherman, making him all the more marginal. Thus his celebration of the peripheral in the age of Mappō was essentially an apotheosis of his own situation.

In a related move Nichiren also theorized that the Japanese archipelago in general became the center of the Buddhist cosmos vis-à-vis continental Asia and the former center of that cosmos, India. In *Kenbutsu mirai ki*, a text that Chigaku indirectly referenced in his conversation with Dhārmapala, Nichiren claimed that the Chinese monk Zhanran (711-82) of the Tiantai School knew that Buddhism had already ceased to exist in India. In this text, Nichiren also notes that Buddhism had been lost in China because of the invasion of the Mongols. In *Kenbutsu mirai ki*, Nichiren claimed that another Tiantai monk, Zhushi (964-1032), knew that Buddhism was going to return to its original ground in the west. Nichiren claimed that this is the place "where the moon appears" (India) and that Buddhism was going to return there "from the east where the sun rises" (Japan).[16] In another work, the *Kangyō Hachiman shō*, Nichiren explicitly refers to Indians as the "moon tribe" and the people of Japan as the "sun tribe." "Hitherto," wrote Nichiren, "the Buddha Dhārma of India had spread from west to east. But like the moon, its light is feeble; it

[16]Stone, "Placing Nichiren in the 'Big Picture': some ongoing Issues in Scholarship," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 1999 26/3-4, 415. Quotes from the In *Kenbutsu mirai ki* and *Kangyō Hachiman shō* are her translations.

could never dispel the darkness of the Final Dhārma age [*mappō*]. Now it was the time for the Buddha Dhārma of Japan to rise like the sun, moving from east to west, and illuminate the world."[17]

Chigaku deployed Nichiren's logic of "hierarchy inversions," as Jacqueline Stone puts it,[18] in a modern context where it took on a meaning with respect to Japan's position in a global order of colonized and colonizers. Chigaku's thought was consistent with similar attempts by intellectuals such as Okakura Tenshin (1862-1913). Okakura was an art historian who claimed that over centuries Japan became Asia's living "museum." This meant that all of the art/civilization of the continent flowed eastward to Japan, its terminus. There Japanese preserved, synthesized, and developed it. According to Okakura, following modernization beginning around 1868 with the Meiji Restoration, Japan also started to successfully synthesize pan-Asian civilization with the industrially grounded civilization of the West. Because of this, Okakura argued, Japan's mission became to lead the entire world into a more harmonious and better age.[19]

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[17] Ibid., 416.
[18] See Ibid, 417 and Stone's *Original Enlightenment Thought and the Transformation of Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 298.
[19] See Okakura Kakuzo (Tenshin), *Ideals of the East*, especially, 5-10.

Chigaku usage of Nichiren's logic of inversion in the modern context also resonated with Dhārmapala's own project of bolstering Sinhalese nationalism via both a nuanced interpretation of history and what one might call a fundamentalism characterizing his modern Buddhism. Dhārmapala clearly articulated his vision of history in a pamphlet he published in 1902 in California, immediately following the trip to Japan when he met Chigaku. In the pamphlet, Dhārmapala writes that 2,400 years previously the British lived in a barbaric state and they were conquered and sold as slaves by Romans. He writes that barbarity still characterized the British, citing "[c]ruelty, drunkenness, slaughter of innocent animals, wife-beating … [and the] promiscuous dancing of men and women regardless of the laws of decency." Dhārmapala claimed that "[c]ompassion, gentleness, [and] mercy are divine qualities which are absolutely foreign" to the savage British."

Dhārmapala declared in the piece that Sinhalese colonists left Bengal 2,400 years previously in search of fertile pastures. They found the island of Lanka he continued, naming it Tambapann. He stated that Sinhalese have never been conquered and that they are ethnologically unique. They have, he wrote, no "slave blood" in them and they have never been conquered. He stressed the way that neither Tamil nor European "vandals" had been able to subdue the

"Aryan" Sinhalese. Lastly, Dhārmapala wrote that "Aryan Sinhalese" made their "bright beautiful island" into a "paradise" before its destruction by barbaric "vandals." Presumably, the earlier vandals were the Dutch and Portuguese colonists and the latter ones were the British.[20]

The word "Aryan" in the writings of Dhārmapala refers to the European construct of a pure race that had come to India from the west in prehistoric times, where they conquered and brought civilization to the indigenous Dravidian race. Unfortunately however, from the European perspective, Aryans also "racially" intermingled with the aboriginal population. Because of this, the story goes, civilization was lost in South Asia after the initial flickering represented by Vedic culture and it was definitively eradicated after ninth century Muslim invasions. According to some Western accounts these invasions completely diminished the effects of a revitalization of Indian—and especially Buddhist Indian—civilization cased by Greek incursions into northeastern India and Central Asia in the fourth century CE. Luckily enough, however, from the perspective of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century common sense, these Aryans, also known as the Indo-Europeans,

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[20] Angarika Dhārmapala, "History of an Ancient Civilization," collected in *Return to Righteousness: A Collection of Speeches, Essays and Letters of Angarika Dhārmapala*, ed. Ananda Gurge (Colombo: The Government Press, Ceylon, 1965), 479-80.

came to Europe as well and were the ancestors of the Greeks and civilized Europeans in general.[21]

Dhārmapala turned the racist historical logic legitimizing Western imperialism on its head. In so doing he did not necessarily challenge the logic legitimizing imperialism, nationalism and racism. He "believed" in the superiority of "Aryans." He just found the purest embodiment of the race on his native island instead of first Ancient Greece, and more recently northwestern or central Europe. As part of his historically questionable celebration of his island nation's "pure" history, Dhārmapala also constructed what Gannath Obeyesekere labeled "Protestant Buddhism."[22] Dhārmapala attributed possession of what in actuality were ideal Christian forms of morality to the Buddhist Sinhalese in their pure state, before the encroachment of outsiders. He intended his reforms to lead to a return to this state. In the construction of this new Buddhism, what

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[21] See, for example, J.P. Mallory, *Indo-Europeans: Language, Archeology and Myth* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989), especially the first chapter on the "Indo-European hypothesis," and the epilogue on the genealogy of the "Aryan" concept.

[22] See H. L. Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 25-6. Senevirante notes that what he calls "Buddhist Modernism" and "Neo-Buddhism"—synonyms for Obeyesekere's Protestant Buddhism—signify "in effect a new religion" developed by the elite classes of Sri Lanka under the British. He writes "they had accepted the politics, the economics, and the culture of the colonial master and inevitably had to do the same with religion. While rejecting Christianity as a faith … (they) consciously or unconsciously modeled their religion on it."

Donald Lopez terms a specifically "modern Buddhism,"[23] Dhārmapala selected, abstracted, or isolated elements from a much more complex and diverse, traditional Sinhalese Buddhism. The older Buddhism was characterized by ritual, "superstition" and other characteristics that had no meaning from the perspective of the progress-oriented rationality of modern nationalism.[24]

Dhārmapala's rhetorical strategy expressed qualities that also characterized Chigaku's Nichirenism. As planned in *Shūmon no ishin*, Chigaku wanted to start by "unifying" the Nichirenshū sect of

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[23] In *Modern Buddhism* Lopez defines the term as follows: "The relation between classical Buddhism and what I refer to … is more than a matter of simple chronology or a standard periodization …. Certainly, modern Buddhism shares many of the characteristics of other projects of modernity, including the identification of the present as a standpoint from which to reflect upon previous periods in history and to identify their deficiencies in relation to the present. Modern Buddhism rejects many of the ritual and magical elements of previous forms of Buddhism, it stresses equality over hierarchy, the universal over the local, and often exalts the individual above the community. Yet … modern Buddhism does not see itself as the culmination of a long process of evolution, but rather as a return to the origin, to the Buddhism of the Buddha himself. There is certainly a criticism of the past, but that critique is directed not at the most distant Buddhism, but at the most recent. Modern Buddhism seeks to distance itself most from those forms of Buddhism that immediately precede it, that are even contemporary with it" (xi). Later Lopez argues that contrary to the claims of many modern Buddhists it "is perhaps better to consider modern Buddhism not a universal religion beyond sectarian borders, but as itself a Buddhist sect." Lopez finally notes that just as with traditional sects, "modern Buddhism has its own lineage (and) its own doctrines" (xli).

[24] See Seneviratne, especially, 3-24 on the issue of the character of traditional religion in Sri Lanka and the difference between it and what he calls "Buddhist Modernism."

traditional Nichiren Buddhism. In the end he wanted to unify all thought, faith and knowledge, discerning and imposing one correct way to exist in the universe in general. He wanted to “return” to harmony with a singular and pure monistic truth. In post-Meiji Restoration Japan, Chigaku embraced the de-ritualization of religion that the government enforced: modernity gave him the freedom to deny the value of centuries of religious history in Japan and supposedly work his way both backwards and forwards to a harmonious utopian condition that he believed the *Lotus Sūtra* and Nichiren mutually envisioned. In his will to arrive at a state hierarchically at the cutting edge of progress and at a timelessness outside of the vicissitudes of historical, Chigaku embodied to a large degree the manifold contradictions of modernity itself.

The Wondrous Logos

In “Darumapara-shi,” Dhārmapala asks Chigaku what the particular characteristics of Nichiren Buddhism are and Chigaku answers that Nichiren Buddhism is distinct because of the way that it interprets the *Lotus Sūtra*. Chigaku notes that “Nichiren taught that the entirety of Buddhist teachings are discussed in the *Nyorai juryō* [“fathoming the lifespan of the Buddha”] chapter which is [or contains] the fundamental teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra*,”[25] an

[25] Yamakawa, 550.

extremely important text in Māhayana Buddhism.[26] In the sixth century, the Tiantai School of Chinese Buddhism began a tendency to apotheosize the *Lotus*' text. This started in China with Zhiyi, the founder of the school. Zhiyi and those who followed him in the tradition began to see the text as a perfect crystallization and embodiment of all of Buddhist teachings, which in were already the highest form of truth.

In other words, Zhiyi and Tiantai thought came to increasingly to regard or treat the *Lotus* as not just a reflection or representation of universal truth, nor even merely as an embodiment of that truth. They came to think of the sutra as the absolutely ultimate truth itself. The apotheosis of the *Lotus* occurred through a logic of resemblances and correspondences grounded philosophically in two insights. The first is what is called *ichinen-sanzen* in the tradition, which we can literally translate as "three thousand realms in one thought-moment." *Ichinen* or three thousand realms is shorthand

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[26] Māhayana (Jpn., Dajō; Eng., Greater Vehicle) Buddhism began to coalesce as a movement in India some time before the second century CE. It is contrasted with the Theravada tradition, which is called Hinayana (Jpn., Shōjō) or "Lesser Vehicle" from the Māhayana perspective. With Māhayana there was an increasing focus on compassion and practices aimed at alleviating the suffering of others instead of being concerned with one's own liberation. Māhayana is extremely inclusive in the sense that a wide variety of beliefs and practices are subsumed within it and their multiplicity is grounded in the idea that a wide variety of means is legitimate and/or necessary in assisting others.

for every thing that exists and *sanzen* or one thought moment is shorthand for any given moment of consciousness. The implication of *ichinen-sanzen* is that every single thing in the universe contains or participates in every other thing. For example, hell contains heaven and everything in between and vice versa, and even the most vile person or thing is identical with the Buddha. The second insight is that proper practice involves compassionately using "expedient means" (Skt., *upaya*, Jpn., *hōben*) to end suffering. According to this mode of thought, seeing the ultimate truth in the *Lotus*' text and encouraging people to have faith in the text is a useful tool or a medicine for troubled souls. After Zhiyi, followers of *Lotus* teachings entertained a variety of views regarding the text's actual status as an embodiment of ultimate truth, but believers in *Lotus*-centered Buddhism consistently valued the sutra as key in "expedient" efforts to work towards one's own salvation and the salvation of others.

Nichiren trained as a monk within the Tendai tradition, meaning that he became a monk in the school that was the Japanese version of Chinese Tiantai. He built on the ideas of Zhiyi, Saichō (the eighth century monk who brought Tendai to Japan) and subsequent Tendai thought, going further still in discerning the locus of ultimate truth within a narrowly defined textual space within the

Lotus Sūtra. He proclaimed that the truth of Buddhism/the universe is contained in its entirety within the *Lotus*' *Juryō nyorai* chapter.

By Japan's medieval period Tendai had thoroughly assimilated esoteric Buddhism, a form of monistic, immanentist thought that in Japan's esoteric school proper, Shingon, privileged the cosmic Buddha, Dainichi Nyorai (Great Sun Buddha, Skt., Mahāvairocana).[27] Māhayana thought and belief spawned and encompassed innumerable Buddhas as divine and soteric figures that Buddhologists contrast with the "historical Buddha," Śākyamuni. In (Shingon) esoteric thought, however, all Buddhas including Śākyamuni, as well as everything else in the universe are emanations of Dainichi.

Chigaku tells Dhārmapala in "Darumapara-shi" that in the "Juryō" (or "lifespan," as it is often abbreviated) chapter of the *Lotus*, the "historical Buddha" proclaims that he is actually none other than the "one and only supreme Buddha who attained true awakening in

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[27] See David Gordon White, "Introduction" to *Tantra in Practice*, ed. White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 9. This is White's elegant general definition of Esoteric/Tantric Buddhism, which in Japan is called *mikkyō* or "secret teachings": "Tantra is that Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains the universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways." However, White continues, the definition of Tantra or Esoteric Buddhism must be modified "according to its contexts."

the infinitely remote past."[28] Chigaku's interpretation of the "Juryō" chapter reflects Nichiren's appropriation of medieval Tendai's tendency to identify the cosmic Buddha of esotericism with the Buddha of the second half (*honmon* or "original teaching") of the *Lotus Sūtra*. From the perspective of Nichiren Buddhism, the Original Buddha or *Honbutsu* that appears in the *Lotus Sūtra*'s second half reveals its true essence as the original ground (*honji*) of which the "historical Buddha" was only a trace manifestation (*suijaku*). This revelation occurs in the "Juryō" chapter. The *Lotus* tradition that found its extreme expression in Nichiren's thought in contradistinction to Shingon Buddhism particularly emphasized the absolute identity of Śākyamuni, the Buddha who manifested on this earth, and the cosmic and eternal Buddha of the "Juryō" chapter.

Nichiren Buddhism thus in general teaches that "worldlings," as Stone translates *shujō* (living things including humans), constitute the body and activity of the cosmic, original and eternal Buddha, despite the fact that we usually do not realize it. Notably, in some forms of this type of thought, which modern scholars call *hongaku shisō* or "original awakening thought," believers hold that even grass and trees embody the fully awakened

[28] Yamakawa, 557.

substance of the Buddha and/or his activity.[29] *Hongaku* thought articulates that the degraded world in which we live is always already the "pure-land" of the Buddha, and—in extreme cases—that even insentient elements of this world are part of that Buddha, part of that purity.

The only true problem then for those who understand *hongaku shisō* remains realizing or actualizing themselves and the experiential world as part and parcel with the Buddha and the ontological space or place of the Buddha's existence. In his mature thought Nichiren advocated chanting of the title of the *Lotus Sūtra*, or *namu myōhō renge kyō* ("hail to the lotus flower Sūtra of the wonderful law"). In the tradition the chant is known as the *daimoku*. Nichiren taught chanting the *daimoku* as an exclusive practice that would in any given moment actualize the awareness of one's identity with the original Buddha of the "Juryō" chapter.

Interestingly, in texts, such as "Darumapara-shi," *Shūmon no ishin* and *Honge shōshakuron*, Chigaku does not particularly emphasize chanting the *daimoku*, chanting of the *Lotus*' title. Rather, in "Darumapara-shi" he privileges what he calls faith-practice or *shingyō*. For example, at one point Dhārmapala tells Chigaku that he

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[29] *Hongaku shisō* is not exclusive to Nichiren, Tendai or even Japanese Buddhism. However, particularly pronounced forms of it have occurred in the Japanese context.

practices the ten *pāramitās*, a set of practices or literally "perfections" that govern the activity of *bodhisattvas*, ideal figures in the Māhayana tradition who vow to assist others in this world instead of selfishly becoming otherworldly Buddhas. The ten *pāramitās* include the practices of generosity, morality, and meditation. Chigaku responds, saying "Nichiren denied that the practice of the ten *pāramitās* is directly the practice of the wondrous law."[30]

Historically, East Asian Buddhists have generally disparaged traditional Ceylonese Buddhism as a "lesser vehicle." Perhaps Dhārmapala was attempting to impress Chigaku with the ecumenical spirit evidenced by his observance of the ten *pāramitās*. However, in Chigaku's Nichirenism such activities were peripheral and in "Darumapara-shi" Chigaku tells Dhārmapala that there are two general types of practice: *shingyō* and *hōgyō* or dhārma-practice. The ten *pāramitās*, Chigaku tells Dhārmapala, are mere *hōgyō*. *Hōgyō*, Chigaku says, focus primarily on assisting others in a way inappropriate in the age of *mappō*. But *shingyō* meant "not caring about one's own body or life" or *fushaku shinmyō*, while having faith or belief in the truth of the wondrous law, or *myōhō*. Chigaku

[30] Yamakawa, 561.

emphatically underscores for Dhārmapala that one should fundamentally practice only *shingyō* in the present degenerate age.[31]

Dhārmapala then tries to maintain that even if faith-practice without caring for one's body or life is foundational, concrete practices imbued with principles such as the ten *pāramitās* are still important. Dhārmapala suggests that because ordinary people do not possess the spiritual powers of Nichiren, perhaps faith coupled with a spirit of *fushaku shinmyō* is not enough. Chigaku's response is: "What I am talking about now are fundamental principles. What you are talking about are methods for putting the *myōhō* into effect." In short, Chigaku remains adamant that the most important and foundational Buddhist practice has become a deep faith in the *myōhō*, a faith expressed in the spirit of *fushaku shinmyō*. All else, for Chigaku, would follow from that.[32]

Chigaku's usage of the term *myōhō* in his conversation with Dhārmapala makes it difficult to define. The second part of the compound, *hō*, is the Sino-Japanese translation of the Sanskrit term Dhārma, which in Buddhism means the teachings and/or the practices of the Buddha and his followers. It is written in East Asia with the Chinese ideograph that also means law. Thus it traditionally refers to teachings—such as that of the perpetual flux of all things and the

[31] Ibid., 562
[32] Ibid.

interrelationship ("dependent origination") of all phenomena—that seem to subvert the possibility of fixed laws. At the same time *myōhō* seems to have exactly the opposite meaning of a fixed law on the other. The first part of the compound, *myō*, means something like "mysterious" or "wonderful." In Chigaku's usage, together they mean the fundamental and governing principle and/or order of the cosmos.

The meaning of *myōhō* resembles that of the word "logos" in European languages. One definition of logos notes that it can mean "'word, 'speech,' and 'principle." It also notes that in pre-Socratic philosophical contexts logos often meant "reason," that in Plato and Aristotle it meant "'*nous*' ('mind' or 'reason')," that in Stoicism it took on the meaning of reason and speech, and that in early Christianity it expressed the "creative power of God."[33] That *myōhō*'s use as an abbreviation of the *Lotus* text is itself does not contradict its definition as logos. The Tiantai, Tendai, and Nichiren lineages tend to identify the text with the truth or order of the universe and not simply as a representation or even simple embodiment of that truth. It is particularly appropriate for comparison that Western thought identifies logos with speech because these forms of Buddhism suppose that (or act as if) the *Lotus*

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[33] Geedes MacGregor, *Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Paragaon House, 1989), 386-7.

Sūtra represents the direct words of the eternal or original Buddha. The Nichiren tradition also holds that it is possible to express and realize one's identity with the *Honbutsu*'s immanence linguistically, via the chanting of the sacred title of the sūtra as if singing it in harmony with the cosmos.

We can find several examples of *myōhō* as logos in "Darumapara-shi." For example, early in the text, Dhārmapala, in confirming what he is learning from Chigaku, says "what I am hearing is that Saint Nichiren appeared in Japan, that the *myōhō* is the great law [*daihō*] of the universe, and that by means of this wonderful law [*myōhō*] he taught that the world should be unified."[34] Chigaku's affirms this understanding. Notably, the text depicts *myōhō* here as an immanent, singular mode of being to which it is possible to return. Later, in response to Dhārmapala's concern regarding difficulties that are possible in spreading Buddhism to places like America, Chigaku says that, "the various ideals of the universe are to be fused in the ideals of the *Lotus Sūtra*. For this reason to sublate the ways (*hō*) of the various peoples of the world and cause them to reenter the *myōhō* is the proper way to spread the teachings of Buddhism."[35]

The definition of *myōhō* as logos is also consistent with the way that Chigaku defined and used the term in a compilation of his

[34] Yamakawa, 554-6.
[35] Ibid., 563.

lectures on Nichirenism that he published in 1934, *Nichirenshugi gairon* ("an outline of Nichirenism"). There he predicts that *sekai tōitsu* (world unification) will mean that "the world will return to the one *myōhō*, people will live in the one *myōhō* and we will reach [the point where] the three thousand things [i.e., everything] will automatically be realized as fused in one principle [*yūhō* 融法]."[36] In a 1910 text, *Nichiren Shōnin no kyōgi* (Saint Nichiren's doctrine), Chigaku wrote similarly that according to Nichiren's *Kanshin honzonshō* "the time must come for people all over the world to return to oneness in the *myōhō*" and in a headnote on the same page Chigaku defines "*myōhō no ikka*" 妙法の一化 or becoming one in the *myōhō* in this way: "the affair whereby everybody in the world becomes the people of the *myōhō* [*myōhō no tami*] and Nichiren's great goal."[37]

M*yōhō*, however, remains a "mysterious" logos. The indeterminate nature of *myōhō* means that its meaning is adaptable to a variety of circumstances. With respect to "Darumapara-shi," adherence to *myōhō* would correspond to an end of injustice on the level of Western imperialism. Chigaku, along with Dhārmapala and people such as Okakura, were attempting to invent an anti-Hegelian,

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[36] Tanaka Chigaku, *Nichirenshugi gairon* (Tokyo: Atoreisha, 1936).
[37] Tanaka Chigaku, *Nichiren Shōnin no kyōgi* (Tokyo: Kokuchū Sangyō, 1910), 194.

Hegelian telos grounded in forms of Asian logos. Jean-Paul Sartre once wrote of something similar when he referred to the "moment of the boomerang," a time when the contradiction between the humanism of the West and the West's inadequate treatment of the colonized non-West would lead to the violence of imperialism turning back upon the West.[38] According to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri this "moment of negativity," for Sartre, "is posed as the necessary first step in transition toward the ultimate goal of a raceless society that recognizes equality, freedom, and common humanity of all.[39]

The meeting of Dhārmapala and Chigaku brings to mind something similar to Sartre's boomerang effect. Sartre's boomerang of the non-West turning back on the West reminds one of the boomerang of Nichiren Buddhism as articulated by Chigaku. In other words, Nichiren projected the return of Buddhism from Japan in the East to India in the west. In the mind of Tanaka Chigaku, there was conceptual slippage between the west as India and the "West" as the center of a modern world dominated by the nations of Europe and the North America. In other words, Nichirenism fostered an alternative logic to the one stipulating the inferiority of the non-West. This

[38] Jean-Paul Sartre, preface to *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Franz Fanon (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 20.
[39] Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 130-1.

alternative mode of thought attempted to re-center the world. The center in Chigaku's mind could and would become Japan as the nation-state representative of the principles or spirit of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Dhārmapala and Chigaku skillfully deployed the rhetoric of a modern nationalism that drew from images of a mostly imaginary past and what seemed like traditional local culture. But the formation of an independent Sri Lankan nation-state and Sinhalese nationalism certainly brought no racism-free utopia to the island, and Chigaku's Nichirenism undoubtedly encouraged modern Japanese versions of not only nationalism but also an imperialism that victimized subject populations at least as much as Western Imperialism. It would be best, however, not to treat Nichirenism and Chigaku as indications of some sort of lack, a necessary step in a Japanese or global dialectic (or any other kind of process) towards freedom, equality and/or the eradication of violence and racism. This is because, for one thing, Chigaku and Nichirenism obviously functioned quite well. People were mobilized and affected, which is not to say that Chigaku and his Nichirenism were good for Japan or the world. The appropriate question to ask at this point is how (even before why) Chigaku's Nichirenism discourse, his employment of "wondrous" or "mysterious" ideals, worked.

Chigaku, Evasiveness and the Power of Affect: The Axiomatic Logic of Nichirenism

According to George Tanabe, the *Lotus Sūtra* expresses an emptiness, and not in exactly in the famous sense of Buddhist "philosophy" (as *śunyatā*).[40] He notes that "[e]very text is caught in an intricate web with its interpreters. But the *Lotus Sūtra* possesses one characteristic that lends itself more easily to this process. In a real way, the text is empty insofar as the real *Lotus Sūtra* is never preached." Instead the Sūtra is largely made up of parables encouraging faith in the Sūtra, along with praises for the efficacy of faith in the text itself. Tanabe notes that as the chapters of the *Lotus* unfold "praises for the *Lotus Sūtra* mount with increasing elaboration," and "it is easy to … fail to notice that the preaching of the *Lotus* sermon *never takes place*. The text, so full of merit, is a

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[40] The concept of emptiness or *śunyatā* dates back to early Māhayana. It does not have a single interpretation. Several lineages or schools over the long history of Māhayana have articulated a variety of discourses on the term's meaning. These discourses also corresponded to a variety of very specific and complex rituals and practices. In general, *śunyatā* corresponds the notion that any given identity—such as the self—from an ultimate perspective has no permanence. Emptiness in this sense is the historical foundation of such notions as *ichinen sanzen* and the Māhayana emphasis on compassion (because the self does not have an independent existence), which led to the concept of *upaya*. I do not believe that emptiness as *śunyatā* is what Tanabe had in mind when he described the *Lotus Sūtra* because most Buddhist discourses on *śunyatā* are exceedingly and paradoxically full in terms of philosophical sophistication.

lengthy preface without a book."[41] In a separate essay and with particular respect to Chigaku, Tanabe argues that "[s]ince the text is empty, it means that what Tanaka saw was not his own personal interpretations drawn in the context of the Nichiren tradition, but a clear mandate issued by a scripture whose meaning, as far as he was concerned, was as absolutely self-evident as it was absolute."[42]

In other words, Chigaku's doctrine and his interpretation of the *Lotus* were at their core tautological. However, within the confines of Chigaku's self-referential logic there was much room for creativity. This was especially evident by the late part of the 1910s, when Chigaku divined various correspondences between three vows made by Nichiren and Esoteric Buddhist teachings. He became even more creative when he then made systematic connections between these vows, conflated with Esoteric Buddhist teachings, and what he considered to be the three essential characteristics of Japan's national polity (*kokutai*). Finally, Chigaku correlated the three core teachings of Nichiren Buddhism with those same three elements of Japan's *kokutai*.

In a 1918 lecture that was published in book form in 1923 Chigaku explained the "three great vows" Nichiren made in the

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[41] George Tanabe, introduction to *The Lotus Sūtra and Japanese Culture*, ed. George and Willa Jane Tanabe (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), 2.
[42] Tanabe, "Tanaka Chigaku," in Ibid., 207.

Kaimokushō. Nichiren wrote there that he would be the pillar, the eyes and the great vessel of Japan and according to Chigaku, "a Japan with no pillar is a Japan that is destroyed. A Japan with no eyes is a Japan that is in darkness. A Japan with no vessel is a Japan that sinks." Chigaku next stated that in making his three great vows Nichiren intended to save the world and that this is "nothing other than the teaching of the eternal original Buddha." Chigaku furthermore notes in this context that three bodies of the Buddha correspond to Nichiren's three great vows.

In Māhayana esotericism,[43] the original or cosmic Buddha is often divided into the Truth Body or dhārmakāya (*hōshin*), which is all pervading abstract immanence; the Enjoyment Body or sambhogāya (*hōjin*), which is the Buddha that exists in extra-terrestrial realms; and the Emanation Body or nirmānakāya (*ōjin*), which is the Buddha as manifested in our world, as was the case with Śākyamuni. For Chigaku, the Truth Body corresponded with the pillar of the nation, the Enjoyment Body corresponded with wisdom

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[43] The dividing line between Māhayana Buddhism in general and the teachings of the various esoteric schools—in Japan and elsewhere—is somewhat fuzzy. It is probably best to say that theories such as those of the Buddha's three bodies as voiced by Chigaku express an Esoteric or Tantric Buddhist tendency within a form of Buddhism that is not Esoteric in any proper sense.

or the eyes of the nation, and the Emanation Body corresponded with compassion or the great vessel of the nation.[44]

Chigaku next references the eighth-century compilation of national origin myths, *Nihon shoki* to assert that the foundational principles (*kenkoku no shugi*) of Japan, which he calls the three great fundamentals (*san taikō*) are also correlated with Nichiren's three great vows on the one hand and the three bodies of the Buddha on the other. The *san taikō* according to Chigaku are the cultivation of justice (*yōsei*), which he equates with the heart/mind of filial piety and loyalty; the acquisition of brightness (*chōki*), which he equates with knowledge or wisdom; and the accumulation of happiness (*setsukei*), which he equates with compassion. In short, the argument here is that *yōsei* is the pillar of the nation, *chōki* corresponds to the eyes of the nation, and *setsukei* is the same as the great ship of the nation.[45]

Later, first in a series of articles published in 1921 in the Kokuchūkai organ *Tengyō minpō* then in the form of a book titled *Nihon kokutai no kenkyū* (1922), Chigaku correlated *yōsei*, *chōki* and *setsukei* with the *sandaimihō*, which is abbreviated as the *sanpi*, of Nichiren Buddhism. The *sanpi* are three concrete components of the

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[44] Tanaka Chigaku, *Nichiren shōnin no san daiseigan* (Tokyo: Shishiō Bunko, 1998), 178-9.
[45]Ibid., pp. 38, 180.

actualization of the knowledge that we everyday worldlings are identical with the eternal original Buddha. The first of the *sanpi* is the *daimoku*, or the chanting of the Sūtra's title explained above. The second is the *honmon no honzon* or the "true object of worship." This is the eternal original Buddha as revealed in the *juryō* chapter conflated with his/its representation in the form of a mandala, a visual or otherwise material representation of the cosmos common to esoteric forms of Buddhism. The *honmon no honzon* mandala features a calligraphic representation of the *daimoku*, "*namu Myōhō Rengekyō*." The third of the *sanpi* is the *honmon no kaidan*. The *honmon no kaidan* is literally the "ordination platform of the true teaching." For Nichiren it also came to mean wherever one practices the Buddhism of the *Lotus Sūtra*. For Chigaku the *Honmon no Kaidan* came to mean the Japanese nation-state.

According to Chigaku in *Nihon kokutai no kenkyū*, the *sankō* (*yōsei*, *chōki* and *setsukei*), which he earlier correlated with the three great vows of Nichiren, are also correlated with the *sanpi* of Nichiren Buddhism.[46] Looking at this text together with *Nichiren shōnin no seigan* we can infer that (1) *yōsei*, the cultivation of justice through loyalty and filial piety, equals the pillar of Japan and the foundation of the heart/mind, which moreover is the same as the *honzon*, the

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[46] Ōtani, 255-257, for summary.

object of worship; (2) *chōki*, the acquisition of brightness, is the same thing as the eyes of Japan and the foundation of knowledge, which is the same thing as the *daimoku* or the chanted sacred title of the *Lotus*; and (3) *setsukei*, the accumulation of happiness, is the same thing as the great ship of Japan and the foundation of virtue, which equals the *kaidan* or the place of practice. If this seems like a form of mathematical reasoning it is because, like arithmetic, it is for the most part an axiomatic logic.[47] In other words, its meaning is purely formal and it is performative more than it is semantic.

The kinds of connections Chigaku made between, for example, *yōsei* and the *honmon no honzon* were nothing new in Buddhism—there is a long tradition of similar exegetical practices that have probable roots primarily in Indian, Tibetan and Chinese Esoteric Buddhism. However, in such contexts ritual governance of the transmission of knowledge ensured practical content that differed greatly with Chigaku's.[48] The end of Chigaku's performative logic was a unification of the world to be carried out by the Japanese, whom in "Darumapara-shi" he calls the "people of the *myōhō*"

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[47] Deleuze & Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 248-251; Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 453-473.

[48] On the issue of premodern contexts' difference from modern ones, see Rueben Habito, "The Logic of Nonduality and Absolute Affirmation: Deconstructing Tendai *Hongaku* Writings," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* vol. 22, nos. 1-2 (1995): 98-99.

(*myōhō no minzoku*) and in *Nihon kokutai no kenkyū* he calls *Tengyō minzoku*, or people of the heavenly task or *tengyō* . Chigaku took the term *tengyō* from the *Nihon shoki*, where it signifies the divinely ordained mission of Jimmu, the first mythical emperor of Japan. Chigaku sometimes used the phrase *sekai tōitsu no tengyō* or the heavenly task of uniting the world, along with either simply *tengyō* or "heavenly task" or *sekai tōitsu*, to sum up the mission he proposed for Japan.

In further extrapolating from the *Nihon shoki*, Chigaku also described this mission in terms of putting the eight quarters of the universe under one roof or *hakkō ichi'u*. This phrase became a universal slogan for Japan's putative mission to save the world from Western imperialism during the fifteen-years of war that ended in 1945.[49] In the context of the *Nihon shoki*'s compilation such concepts probably meant "pacifying" and "unifying" a relatively small portion of present-day Japan and certainly not the world as we know it. For Chigaku and those who later utilized his slogans, the slogan meant "unifying," "pacifying" and/or conquering the entire world or even the whole universe.

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[49] Ōtani, 188. Chigaku first used the term, which he coined from a longer passage in the *Nihon shoki*, in a 1913 essay titled "Jimmu tennō no kenkoku" [the national foundation of emperor Jimmu]. The article was carried over three issues of the Risshō Ankokukai organ, *Kokuchū shinbun*.

To be sure, Chigaku at times indicated that the whole world would become a Buddhist “pure land” or this-worldly heaven. Chigaku usually imagined this pure land as the “Land of Ever-Tranquil Light” (Jakkō-do).[50] At times Chigaku wrote of Jakkō-do in terms of its immediate actualization at the level of individual believers through an absolute faith in the spirit of *fushaku shinmyō*,[51] at other times Chigaku stressed the relationship between the advent of this “tranquil light” and the moral unification of the world to be brought about by *shakubuku* or “aggressive proselytizing.”[52] At still other times he made a direct connection between the establishment of a “world of tranquil light” (*jakkō sekai*) and the global mission/destiny of the Japanese nation-state and its *kokutai*.[53]

In accord with the teachings of Nichirenism, simply affirming that everything exists is ultimately identical with an eternal original Buddha and his activities may be good for a collective self-

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[50] In *Original Enlightenment* (185-6) Stone notes that the concept of this “land,” going back to Chinese Tiantai denoted, “in principle … that which is prior to the arising of the single thought-moment, before the ‘myriad things’ have been differentiated,” in other words primal unity, while in “concrete actuality (it) denotes the differentiated three thousand realms that comprise the phenomenal world in its entirety. Ishida’s lexicon notes that Jakkō-Jōdo is the “Buddha land of universal and eternal truth,” *Reibun Bukkyō*, 491.
[51] Tanaka Chigaku, *Hokkekyō no konpaku* [the spirit of the *Lotus Sūtra*] (Tokyo: Tengyō Minpōsha, 1931).
[52] See for example, Tanaka Chigaku, *Nichirenshugi kyōgigaku taikan* [overview of the study of Nichirenism doctrine], vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōsha, 1970 (1915), 202-3.
[53] Ōtani, 257. Ōtani is referring here to *Nihon Kokutai no Kenkyū*.

esteem. But it in some very actual sense such beliefs mean changing nothing at all, for the better or worse. After all, the doctrine is that everything is *already* the Buddha and an appropriate response to this assertion may well be "so what?" The danger is a slippage into a blessed conservatism that simply accepts whatever the status quo may be or projects for the realization of a better world that accord with the wishes of the powerful in any given context. But such forms of slippage are possible despite and not because of the meaning of Nichirenism's affirmation of divinity of the here and now, which could also manifest as Miyazawa Kenji's benign attempts at societal reform.

Chigaku's discourse was at its core neither heinous nor benign. It was meaningless. The equations he made between the concepts espoused by the *Nihon shoki* and Nichiren's writings exemplify this well. They are abstractions that seem to mean something because of their complexity, but at best they are as meaningful as a series of mathematical "sentences" that are true only within their own tautological universe. For the most part, however, no one asks what arithmetic means. Arithmetic too is an "expedient means," a method of abstractly quantifying in useful ways. What matters is a pragmatic utility enabling us to invent, construct, market, and purchase commodities or tools through the manipulation of

numbers. The manipulation of numbers, in other words, can be quite useful but it does not make numerical sequences expressions of truth. People used Chigaku's Nichirenism discourse similarly. They used it like a multipurpose tool emptied of specificity, one that could be applied in a variety of contexts toward various ends. But there was more to Chigaku's power to move people, although that power too was very much connected to a kind of emptiness that he embodied. I will now address the way that Chigaku's discourse worked and why it was so powerful.

The Affect Factory of Tanaka Chigaku

Miyazawa Kenji wrote about Chigaku in this way in 1920: "I feel, I believe, I look up to, and I am moved by the *myōhō* that is truly and clearly pulsating through Tanaka Sensei." Miyazawa also wrote that "Even if he ordered me to go to the frozen tundra of Siberia or the interior of China I would go. I would moreover even be the shoe attendant at the Kokuchūkai headquarters. If I were able to do that my life would be complete"[54] In 1901, before meeting Chigaku, Takayama Chogyū wrote similarly of the "great spirit" of Chigaku that was evident in his writings, comparing Chigaku to Nichiren himself. Takayama admired Chigaku for the way that allegedly he unbendingly confronted obstacles in upholding his principles.

[54] Yoneda Toshiaki, *Miyazawa Kenji no tegami* [the letters of Miyazawa Kenji] (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 1995), 143.

According to Takayama, this was akin to the way that Nichiren obstinately confronted and opposed the Kamakura state. Interestingly Takayama believed that Nichiren was a Japanese example of the Nietzschian superman. It thus follows that, for Takayama, Chigaku too was such a superman.[55]

One wonders just what it was that moved such individuals to perceive such a "spirit" or wondrous law itself working through Chigaku. If ideas such as that the world and normal human beings are the Buddha and that the world needs to be unified are some lacking in content, it makes sense to look for something extra-semantic in order to explain Chigaku's affect upon people. Because *Shūmon no ishin* was probably his best known and most influential text, and it is a text that celebrates what he called an "aggressive attitude" proper to Nichiren Buddhism, it also makes sense to closely read that text and to try to find that extra-semantic message at the level of a set of attitudes that he transmitted.

Shūmon no ishin is a "manifesto for the revolution of the Nichirenshū sect."[56] Chigaku's plans included reorganization of the sect in a way that mirrored the organization of the nation-state, with

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[55] Takayama Chōgyū, "Tanaka Chigaku-shi no *Shūmon no ishin*" [Mr. Tanaka Chigaku's *Shūmon no ishin*], in *Takayama Chogyū to Nichiren shōnin*, eds. Anesaki and Yamakawa (Tokyo: Hakubunsha, 1913), 21.

[56] Ōtani, 70. Chigaku considered the Risshō Ankokukai and the Kokuchūkai to be lay organizations affiliated with Nichirenshū.

the priests as officials, temples as government offices, the sect headquarters at Mt. Minobu as the seat of government, the sect rules as the law, the sect doctrine as the constitution, and Nichiren as the ruler. With *Shūmon* Chigaku was criticizing his contemporary situation in which there was "no ruler" (Nichiren's posthumous role) and "no people," whom he claims in the text are the motive power behind the Nichirenshū sect-as-nation-state that he imagines. At times, *Shūmon* blurs the distinction between the nation state of Japan and the Nichirenshū sect-as-nation-state.[57]

Among other things, Chigaku also proposes a more rationalized system for sect taxation of believers. With the money raised every year from "tax-payers," Chigaku estimates that three to ten armed merchant ships could be constructed and that they would have names such as the "*myōhō maru*." In times of peace, he plans, the ships would make regular voyages, and Nichiren believers would proselytize to the passengers. The ships, he writes, would take believers on pilgrimages to Mt. Minobu and return trips from there would be free. In the country's time of need, these ships would be used to subdue the enemies of the country and the court (*chōtei*). He

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[57] See for example, *Shūmon no ishin*, 151. Except where noted, translations from *Shūmon no ishin* are mine. The Japanese text I consulted is compiled in *Kindai Nichirenron* (On modern Nichiren), ed.Maruyama Terau (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1981).

calls his maritime plan a “great benevolent task that is in accord with the teachings of Nichirenism.”[58]

As Edwin Lee notes, Chigaku accompanied the main text of *Shūmon* with diagrams and charts in an appendix in which, not only did he maintain that the sect could and should convert the world within 50 years he also made a number of detailed predictions: for example, that within one year (by 1902) the sect would have 800 students, 500 teachers, and three million adherents. He projected that in fifty years there would be 19,900 students, 19,200 teachers, and 23,033,250 believers. Chigaku also provided a timetable with the order of cities throughout the globe to be converted.[59]

The enduring and wide-ranging power of *Shūmon* however lay in Chigaku's utilization of the nearly synonymous constellation of terms, *shinryaku taido* or “an aggressive attitude”, *shakubuku*, and *fushaku shinmyō*. As Chigaku puts it at one point, “genuinely and truly the essential quality of our sect is without a doubt *shakubuku*-ism [the practice of aggressive prosetelyzing, *shakubukushugi*]. In other words this is nothing other than a *shinrayku-teki taido* [aggressive attitude].”[60] He furthermore writes that “the four ideographs [*ji*] of ‘*Hokke shakubuku*’ [lotus flower *shakubuku*, or the

[58] *Shūmon*, 152.
[59] Edwin Lee, “Nichirenism and Nationalism,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 30, no. 1 (1975), 27.
[60] *Shūmon*, 136.

shakubuku of the *Lotus Sūtra*] are a 'declaration of war' that is unlimited."[61] He claims that both the laity and the priests of the sect are commanded to proselytize aggressively. He moreover compares the *Lotus* to the *Koran*, asserting that it is the *Lotus* and not the Islamic scripture that is comparable to a sword. "Don't pray for benefits in this world, don't pray for your body, don't pray for your parents, don't pray for your teacher," he writes, "only pray for aggression, pray to die for the sake of aggression."[62]

Chigaku furthermore writes that "without aggression there are no words, there is no movement, there is no seeing, there is no hearing and missionary activities will not be productive." He writes that without aggression the sect will soon disappear. He then states that what he has in mind is that with 7000 monks and 3,000,000 believers joined together in one voice with an aggressive "charge," mountains will shake and seas will tremble.[63] In short, Chigaku advocated following the "pure sound" (*bonon*) of the bugle of the "advancing army" (*shingun*) that he imagined entering unlimited war for the universe in order to bring a "spiritual world" (*reikai*).[64] In so doing he promised a shattering of restrictions inherent in what he considered an overly materialist modern life.

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[61] *Shūmon*, Ibid.
[62] Ibid, 137.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 134.

From the perspective of what the rationality at the basis of that modern life is supposed to be, Chigaku's vague and empty slogans do not make sense. His original accommodation of Nichiren Buddhism to modern Shinto ideology seems equally empty. However, his words were building blocks of the logic similar to the logic required to build buildings. Yet why anyone would want to dwell in such structures? And why would anyone be persuaded to die for these constructs as in *Shūmon* Chigaku suggests?

However, the conceptual foundations for modern rationality are themselves axiomatic in essence. For example, following a staged confrontation with "radical doubt," Descartes establishes his own existence with the *cogito*, an axiomatic and tautological proposition. It is taken for granted that an "I" exists because there is thinking but little interrogation of what "I" and "thinking" are. In the Latin of the *Meditations*, the sentence "cogito ergo sum" does not even have an "I." Its existence is only inferred by translators/interpreters because thinking exists. The point here is not that Descartes was wrong because the foundation he gave to modern philosophy and epistemology was tautological. His discourse served as "the starting point of any modern philosophy."[65] In other words, it worked in building a structure that would "resist … multidirectional

[65] Hassan Melehy, *Writing Cogito: Montainge Descartes, and the Institution of the Modern Subject* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 105.

transformations"[66] and provide the effect of certainty within a perpetually shifting modernity driven by the creative-destructive forces of capital accumulation and technological development.

The example of Descartes is instructive because recent vehement Japanese Buddhist critics of "original enlightenment thought" idolize the philosopher as the father of a modern rationality they deem indispensable. Chigaku's teachings that this world as is always already expresses the divinity of an eternal original Buddha were very much a variety of the original enlightenment thought that such critics despise.[67] However, the purely tautological bases of rationality, I would argue, are everywhere in modernity. Modern economics as a social science, for instance, still faces the "ultimate barrier" to its mode of thought when it comes to crises it can neither adequately account for nor predict, and as Georg Lukacs argued "it is the very success with which the economy is totally rationalized and transformed into an abstract and mathematically oriented system of formal 'laws' that creates" this barrier.[68]

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[66] Ibid, 106
[67] See Hakayama Noriaki, "Critical versus Topical Philosophy," and Jamie Hubbard, "Topophobia," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm Over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press: 1997).
[68] Georg Lukacs, "History and Class Consciousness," in *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press. 1997), 105-110.

The "law" of supply and demand and the Cartesian cogito provide provisional "answers" that both govern and orchestrate an ordered chaos of what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari call the "deterritorialized flows" of, for example, labor, capital and desire. Chigaku's discourse provided his audiences with something similar. Chigaku promised the imminent return to an immanent law that in an impossible way abolishes all laws. In "Darumapara-shi" he articulated this law in terms of the *myōhō*, a wondrous logos that tends to obstinately conserve the power of its mystery. In *Shūmon* he began to suggest the violent implications of any real attempt to adhere to this impossible law. Chigaku remained conservative in the sense that with him this violence remained only potential or virtual.

In a discussion of Ronald Reagan, Brian Massumi articulates an interesting theory of the "virtual." He writes that Reagan "politicized the power of mime." Reagan's words and the non-verbal cues he gave while speaking did not match, according to Massumi. This is like what mimes do because they decompose movement, breaking the continuity of everyday movement up with a "potentially infinite number" of infinitesimal interruptions. At each of the spaces or moments of interruption there is what Massumi calls a "jerk." With each one of these jerks there is a consciously imperceptible instant during which there seems to be the possibility of an

innumerable variety of changes in direction. Massumi says that "[t]his compresses into the movement under way potential movements that are in some way made present without being actualized."[69]

The effect of this mime-like quality, Massumi argues, is that Reagan mastered virtuality. In other words Reagan communicated relatively little and actualized almost nothing. This apparent inadequacy, according to Massumi, coupled with his "beautiful vibratory voice" was appealing because it manifested an incipience that remained virtual. Reagan was, Massumi argues, "unqualified and without content" and "it was on the receiving end that the Reagan incipience was given content." Reagan's audiences locally actualized his "message," and that is why the president could "be so many things to so many people; that is why the majority of the electorate could disagree with him on so many issues but still vote for him."[70] Massumi calls what Reagan as a political mime transmitted to his audiences "affect" or "intensity."[71] Massumi also alludes to long modern history of the communication of affect through virtual means

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[69] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 40-1.
[70] Ibid., 41.
[71] Ibid., 28.

that allows audiences to actualize a single "message" in diverse ways.[72]

I would argue that Chigaku's charisma was also grounded in this kind of affect or intensity. Chigaku's words inspired people, not because of their meaning, but because of the indefinite quality of a fantastic futurity masked by a plethora of details at an intermediate level. Chigaku's slogans and his tautological logic functioned like little ditties that Nichirenists could sing, along with the *daimoku*, as they figuratively followed him into an open future. To be sure, there is a fine line between unqualified intensity and traces of qualification that clung to both Reagan and Chigaku, mostly in the form of "jingoistic nationalism" entwined with a personal confidence that was also highly contagious.[73] But here is the difficulty. Chigaku excelled at having it both ways when it came to incorporating the modern state and its rationality and offering an escape from that rationality.

While Chigaku evoked images of unbounded bliss, he simultaneously worshiped a hierarchical state structure that entailed the maintenance of restrictions and knowing one's place. I believe that his audiences ignored this contradiction because they too desired to experience an unbounded "freedom" while simultaneously refusing to challenge a status quo that was both restricting *and* comforting. To

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[72] Ibid., 42-3.
[73] Ibid., 41.

adjust to modernity entails feigning belief in "permanences" such as the nation.[74] This requires resigning oneself to one's place within a putatively unquestionable hierarchy of social, political, and economic relationships modeled on the family.[75] However, living within a milieu driven by capital accumulation and concomitant perpetual technological and social change requires a concomitant epistemological adjustment to the very real experience of an apparently boundless and never-ending transgression of every limit imaginable.

Conclusion: Virtual and Actual Nichirenism

Chigaku's discourse and Nichirenism more generally combined what Deleuze and Guattari called the "war machine" with what they called the "apparatus of capture."[76] Their war machine is not *per se* a military organ such as the army or navy of any given nation-state. It is essentially a quality manifest, for example, in

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[74] See discussion of the function of the dialectic between permanence and flux under capitalism in David Harvey, *Justice Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Blackwell: New York, 1996).

[75] I am thoroughly opposed to any analysis suggesting the inevitability of Oedipalization, but one cannot deny the power of the family-model as what Foucault called a "technology of power" in modern societies. This is nowhere more the case than in pre-1945 modern Japan where the image of the nation-state as a "family-nation" or *kazoku-kokka* with the emperor as national father was emphatically promoted by organs of the state and private media.

[76] Deleuze and Guattari dedicate one chapter or "plateau" to the war machine in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "1227: Treatise on Nomadology—The War Machine," 351-423, and one to the apparatus of capture, "7000 B.C.: Apparatus of Capture," 424-473.

science, art and philosophy, and sometimes religion.[77] It represents whatever is creative in breaking down oppositions and in operating outside of conventions. Within modernity the war machine is inseparable from forces of capital accumulation that constantly obliterate all certainties, all permanence.

The apparatus of capture, for Deleuze and Guattari is most typically represented by the state. The apparatus of capture attempts to arrest the violent processes of war machines through political power or the power of the state to police.[78] In modernity this might mean, for example, either cracking down on dissidents or the establishment of restrictions on trade and commerce.

The apparatus of capture and the war machine are not in simple opposition. The state, and particularly the modern state, tends to "appropriate" the war machine and make an all-too-uneasy alliance with it.[79] This alliance is necessitated by a competition-driven need for growth and change precipitated by the forces of capital accumulation and technological development. Unchecked development can also lead to problematic overproduction. Literal wars also then have the function of legitimizing a necessary squander,

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[77] See especially, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 361-374 for "an exact yet rigorous" science as a war machine; 374-380 for philosophical and artistic war machines; and 383-384, for religion as a war machine.
[78] See Deleuze & Guattari's citation of Paul Virilio in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 386.
[79] See Ibid., 335.

with the side-effect of transferring wealth from taxpayers in general to those owning “defense”-related industry. This situation has often (if not always) led to real war, hot or cold. These wars have been against rival nation-states and abstractions such as crime.[80] Within individuals and social, political and/or artistic movements, I would argue that similar alliances between war machines and apparatuses of capture exist, alliances often precipitated by attempts or inducements to adjust to the irresolvable contradiction between relatively permanent structures, such as the nation or nuclear family, and incessant destructive creativity.

In Chigaku, the resolution of these contradictions remained largely virtual. His affect was grounded in the presence of a glorious resolution that was simultaneously immanent and imminent. It was not coincidentally philosophically grounded in the idea of the presence of an equally immanent and imminent Eternal Buddha. As the chapters that follow will demonstrate, later Nichirenists attempted to actualize Chigaku’s teachings in more concrete but equally fruitless ways.

Ishiwara Kanji’s attempted to resolve the contradiction in question, but his resolution remained on what Reinhart Kosselleck

[80] On the relationship between literal wars that include “cold” ones and ones directed against abstractions or even “unspecified enemies,” on the one hand, and both the war machine and the apparatus of capture, on the other, see Ibid., 419-423 and 471-472.

might call the ever-receding "horizon of expectation."[81] In a more pronounced manner than is evident in Chigaku's discourse, he rejected the world of lived experience and sought to actualize the utopia of world unification. The first step in his plan was to blow-up a section of the South Manchurian Railway as a pretext for the establishment of the puppet-state of Manchukuo in 1931. Ishiwara was true to Chigaku's stance on the role of Japan in bringing about the future's utopia.

Other Nichirenists, such as terrorists who murdered civilian elites and sometimes killed themselves in various incidents within Japan in the 1930s were relatively more anti-state, but they were not anti-nation, as their tendency to erotically revere the emperor revealed. They transgressed everyday rationality in a way combining eroticism, violence and religious experience.[82] Their actions were usually attached to political ends, but the social, political and economic rationality of such terrorist actions were grounded in an inability to come to terms with the material contradictions of the everyday experience within capitalist modernity. They often

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[81] See Reinhart Kosselleck, 267-288, on the "horizon of expectation" versus "the space of experience."

[82] For a fascinating, if somewhat ahistorical, articulation of relationship between eroticism, violence, and religious experience, see Georges Bataille, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1986).

succeeded in permanently escaping the limitations of their world, if only through meeting the literal permanence of death.

Lastly, Miyazawa Kenji attempted to represent the "pure land" of the Eternal Original Buddha in the pages of a literature that typically broke down common sense distinctions between such things as the "Orient" and the West, science and religion, and representation and reality. He even tried for a while and in vain to actualize Chigaku's promise of a utopia here and now in the late 1920s and early 1930s by helping the impoverished farmers of his home prefecture, Iwate, in northwestern Japan. He set up a cooperative organization and tried to use it to implement Chigaku-inspired Buddhist thought combined with the ideas of Tolstoy, William Morris and others. For the most part, Miyazawa unfortunately failed in bettering the material circumstances of anyone, although his work does continue to stimulate the imaginations of his readers.

I will later argue that Miyazawa's failure was largely due to the fact that his means of actualization of Chigaku's Promised Land were escapist. His ultimately idealist attempt at reforming the world was stymied by his misrecognition of the material conditions within his milieu. It made little difference in this regard that he celebrated this world as that which is most holy and pure. Much the same can be said regarding Ishiwara and the Nichirenist terrorists mentioned

above. The question haunting the present work is: is there a non-escapist escape from the fundamental dissatisfaction with modernity that was at the root of Nichirenism and its appeal? The imperialism Dhārmapala and Chigaku rhetorically battled in 1902 for the most part ceased to *formally* exist after World War II, but the dissatisfaction in question persists into the present.

Chapter Two: Miyazawa Kenji: A Nichirenist Attempt to Actualize an Ideal World in Literature and Life

Introduction: Miyazawa Kenji and Tanaka Chigaku

Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933) is beloved as both a poet and children's writer in contemporary Japan. Japanese also fondly remember him for his attempts at grassroots social activism. All of this is despite the fact that Miyazawa joined Tanaka Chigaku's notorious Kokuchūkai in 1920 and there are indications that he remained loyal to the group and most of its Nichirenist teachings until his death at the age of 37. What follows will not indict Miyazawa. I will argue, however, that there are profound connections between Miyazawa's life and work, on the one hand, and Tanaka Chigaku and his teachings on the other. I will furthermore suggest that the relationship in question is something that both those who love Miyazawa for various reasons and those who dismiss Chigaku as a fascist should not ignore.

The fundamental connection between the thought of Chigaku and that of Miyazawa centers on their notion that this world, just as it is, is a Buddha realm and that all living things are ultimately the same in essence and substance as the Buddha. In more secular terms this means that an ideal world is always living things are thoroughly imbued with the purest divinity. What within our reach and that all

remains for human-beings is to actualize this preexisting reality. Over his lifetime Chigaku became increasingly convinced that the imperialist Japanese nation-state had to be the agent of that actualization. He believed that the world was corruptly dominated by the Western imperialist powers and that because of this the actualization of this world as a Buddha realm was inseparable from a Japanese mission to supplant the power of the West. Because the modern nation-state that Chigaku attached himself to was also the instrument and instigator of various forms of repression and violence within Japan and overseas, however, the unbounded liberty that Chigaku promised always remained on an ever-receding horizon. In other words it tended to remain virtual.

Through his literature, Miyazawa attempted to actualize the ideal world indicated by the teachings of Tanaka Chigaku. That he was a success in this is attested to by his popularity over the decades. However, his literary endeavors generally remained only that. When he attempted to put his and Chigaku's thought vis-à-vis world transformation into practice more materially and actualize the divinity or Buddha-nature of the world he failed. His ideals remained unrealized for reasons that I attempt to make clear below. I will begin my discussion with a brief overview of the phenomena of

Miyazawa's lingering popularity, followed by a biographical sketch centering on the author's direct relationship with Nichirenism.

The Deification of Miyazawa Kenji

In his introductory comments to a collection of Miyazawa Kenji's poems, the translator Hiroaki Sato states, "Miyazawa Kenji … is probably the only modern Japanese poet who is deified."[1] Miyazawa has not technically been deified under the auspices of any of Japan's formal religions but Sato's laudatory comments reflect the ubiquity of Miyazawa's good reputation in prewar and postwar Japan. Enthusiastic acclaim for Miyazawa's life and work arose immediately after his death in 1933. However, there was also a major "Kenji boom" in the 1990s, when Miyazawa's admirers celebrated the 100th anniversary of his birth. In this context, there were numerous TV specials on the writer and a number of filmmakers also made animated versions of his stories. The Japanese postal service moreover issued a commemorative stamp with Miyazawa's image. In addition, a large number of books and shorter publications on Miyazawa appeared in Japanese during that decade.

Miyazawa's appeal continues into the present century. For example, every year on the anniversary of his death there is an annual "Kenji Festival" in Miyazawa's hometown of Hanamaki in Iwate

[1]Hiroaki Sato, *A Future of Ice* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989), xiii.

Prefecture. Participants offer flowers, read his poems, sing songs he composed, stage plays he wrote, and have a roundtable discussion. "Remember Kenji" groups have related events during the festival at the Hanamaki agricultural school where the author once served as a teacher.[2] There is also a museum in Hanamaki dedicated to Miyazawa's life and work and there is a cultural center in the town that regularly holds symposiums on matters related to the writer. On a more national level, as recently as the summer of 2002, I witnessed posters featuring images of Miyazawa and "Īhatovu," or his fantastic and semi-fictional version of Iwate on the walls of train stations all over greater Tokyo. They were part of a Japan Railways advertising campaign promoting tourism in Iwate.

The popularity of Miyazawa in Japan also means that he has become a cultural commodity that many Japanese wish to export abroad as an example of qualities essentially Japanese yet somehow universal. An English/Japanese-language website maintained in Japan, "The World of Miyazawa Kenji," notes that "[j]ust as Japan was embarking on her rapid journey toward modernization, Miyazawa Kenji was busy putting down deeper roots in the remote rural setting from which he created a wealth of literature whose universality would someday touch the hearts of people all over the

[2] http://www.city.hanamaki.iwate.jp/main/english3/e-4season/autumn/e-kenjisai.htm

world."[3] The site also features downloadable translations of some of Miyazawa's work, a number of essays, and a gallery of paintings and other media inspired by the author. A great number of Miyazawa's works are published in translation in English. In some cases there are several translations of the same story or poem. Sarah Strong and others sponsor some of the best translations of Miyazawa's children's literature by the International Foundation for the Promotion of Languages and Culture (IFLC). This Tokyo-based body defines its mission as primarily translating Japanese authors for the rest of the world to read because of Japan's "increasingly important" 21st century role "in the realm of cultural and linguistic exchange." Such exchange, they hope, will further "mutual understanding throughout the world."[4]

All of this Kenji boosting tends to come with a willed ignorance of the relationship between the writer and Tanaka Chigaku. People who adore Miyazawa often do not even acknowledge his relationship with Chigaku and the Kokuchūkai. When they do acknowledge the relationship they often do not get basic facts correct.

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[3] http://www.kenji-world.net/english/

[4] See the mission statement ("Purpose and Background") at the end of each book in the *Kenji Miyazawa Picture Book Series* (Tokyo: IFLC, various 1990s publications).

For example, a website maintained by Hanamaki's city office it repeatedly states incorrectly that Tanaka Chigaku was a priest.[5]

Miyazawa and the Kokuchūkai

Miyazawa's first exposure to Tanaka Chigaku and the Kokuchūkai occurred some time between December 1918 and March of the following year. He accompanied his mother to Tokyo at the time because his sister became ill while attending college in the capital and had to enter the hospital there. When not by his sister's side Miyazawa went to the Ueno library, saw plays, and visited the Tokyo office of the Kokuchūkai at least once. He also heard Chigaku give a twenty-five minute speech that deeply moved him. He wrote a letter to his friend Hosaka Kanai in 1920 in which he referred to the speech, describing Chigaku in glowing terms. He also declared his allegiance to the Kokuchūkai leader and exhorted his friend to convert to Chigaku's Nichirenism.[6]

Miyazawa formally joined the Kokuchūkai after returning to Iwate. He subsequently became a fervent member and ultimately returned to Tokyo to participate more fully in the activities of the

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[5] www.city.hanamaki.iwate.jp/main/english3/ e-kenji/e-kenjibungaku.htm

[6] Oh Sunhwa, *Miyazawa Kenji no Hokkekyō bungaku: Hōkō suru tamashii* [the Lotus Sūtra literature of Miyazawa Kenji: the wandering spirit] (Tokyo: Tōkai Daigaku Shuppansha, 2000), 17-18 and Ishikawa Yasuaki, *Nichiren to kindai bungakushatachi* [Nichiren and modern writers] (Tokyo: Pitaka, 1978), 113.

group. He joined through a mail-order transaction and soon received a copy of the organization's version of the Nichiren mandala, a symbolic representation of the cosmos featuring a calligraphic representation of the name of the *Lotus Sūtra*. After ritually consecrating the mandala, Miyazawa and his cousin Seki Tokuya led meetings of what became an informal local chapter of the group. Miyazawa also intensively engaged in proselytizing efforts in his hometown. During this period he began to publicly post freshly published copies of the Kokuchūkai organ, the *Tengyō minpō* (People of the heavenly task report) outside of his home. He also attempted to publicize works by Chigaku including *Nichirenshugi no kyōgi* (The doctrine of Nichiren), *Sekai tōitsu no tengyō* (The heavenly task of world unification), and *Myōshū shikimoku Kōgiroku* (Lectures on the systematic formulation of the wondrous sect's teachings). In a famous incident on January 30, 1921, however, Miyazawa suddenly left the family pawnshop where he was worked in Hanamaki and headed for the Kokuchūkai offices in Tokyo. Two books of Nichiren's writings falling off a shelf and onto his back at the family business prompted this trip to Tokyo in 1921. Miyazawa's biographies suggest that he took this as a supernatural sign that he should leave for Tokyo. But years of tension between Miyazawa and his father motivated to his decision to leave Hanamaki with nothing

other than the two books, his *honzon* ("object of worship," the Nichiren mandala) and an umbrella. Tension between Miyazawa and his father had been exacerbated by the young man's conversion to Nichirenism. The traditional sect of the family was Jōdo Shinshū or the True Pure Land Sect and despite this the young Miyazawa made futile attempts to convert his entire family to the teachings of Chigaku.[7]

After arriving in Tokyo, Miyazawa went directly to the Kokuchūkai offices in Ueno. Takachio Chiyō (高知尾智耀), one of the Kokuchūkai's lecturers and the manager of the Kokuchūkaikan (Kokuchūkai Building, the Tokyo branch office), met him at the door. According to the combined recollections of the two men Miyazawa informed Takachio that he had joined the Kokuchūkai the previous year and that the reason he had come to the organization's Tokyo offices was because he wanted his whole family to convert to the society's teachings. Miyazawa confessed that his father refused to convert and he attributed this to his own lack of spiritual cultivation. Miyazawa then asked Takachio if the (Kokuchūkai might have use for him as for example a shoe attendant or someone who posts handbills. Takachio's answered, "I understand that you are

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[7] Ishikawa, 217-18. Cf., Sarah Strong, "The Poetry of Miyazawa Kenji," Ph.D. dissertation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 67.

a member of the society but …we are not particularly looking to recruit anyone now [to do such work]." Takachio noted that "a case such as yours is very common. Changing the religion of one's mother and father is generally impossible. … [H]aving an emotional fight and leaving one's family is also common." Takachio then said that after having a chance to compose himself somewhere Miyazawa might then be able to consult with the Kokuchūkai leaders in a more appropriate and relaxed way. Takachio furthermore suggested that Miyazawa attend the society's nightly lectures.

Miyazawa's responded to Takachio's less than warm welcome by assuring him that he had not come to Tokyo on a whim, that "silly fantasies" had not motivated his arrival. He also promised that he would return for guidance.[8] Miyazawa impressed Takachio as a "sincere and unpretentious lad," but Takachio had no idea that Miyazawa had any particular literary genius or any kind of exceptional future whatsoever.[9]

Miyazawa spent the night with family friends. The next day, by canceling a book subscription, he raised enough money to find a place of his own in the Hongo ward near Tokyo Imperial University.

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[8] Ishikawa, 219.

[9] Mori Soichi, *Miyazawa Kenji to Hokkekyō* [Miyazawa Kenji and the *Lotus Sutra*] (Tokyo: Futsusha, 1960), 36. Ishikawa, 220.

He found work at a mimeograph printing shop the following day.[10] Miyazawa did not like his boss because he believed that the older man was a “self-serving imperialist.” Interestingly, he remarked in a letter that if Chigaku’s concept of nation (*kokka*) had anything in common with his employers’ thought, he would absolutely turn his back on the Kokuchūkai’s leader.[11]

During the approximately nine months of Miyazawa’s stay in Tokyo he attended lectures at the Kokuchūkai regularly and participated in other activities with the group, including sidewalk proselytizing in Ueno Park and passing out copies of the *Tengyō minpō* there in an effort to increase the organ’s readership.[12] Miyazawa also reportedly made eloquent speeches in the park himself.[13] The frequent topic of lectures at the Kokuchūkai as explication of the *Myōshū shikimoku Kōgiroku*, later published in five volumes as the *Nichirenshugi kyōgaku taikan* (abbreviated below as *Taikan*). As we shall see, the text had a profound influence upon Miyazawa. Miyazawa completely read the dense 3308 pages of text five times according to his cousin Seki.[14]

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[10] Sarah Strong, “The Poetry,” 68.
[11] Ishikawa, 221.
[12] Mori, 38.
[13] Ishikawa 217-18.
[14] The *Nichirenshugi kyōgi taikan* resulted from a lecture series that Chigaku gave at the onetime headquarters of the Risshō Ankokukai in Osaka, the Risshōkaku. The lectures lasted from April 1903 to April

Takachio was Miyazawa's primary contact with the Kokuchūkai leadership. He graduated from Waseda University graduate with a degree in philosophy. As a student Takayama Chogyū's writings on Nichiren impressed him greatly and, later, while working as a middle school teacher in Fukushima prefecture, he took part in the first two years (1910 and 1911) of an annual lecture series, the *Honge Bukkyō kaki kōshūkai* (our sect's Buddhist summer lecture series), which Chigaku and the Risshō Ankokukai held at their national headquarters at the time in Miho, Shizuoka Prefecture. Takachio formally joined the organization the second year and, with the encouragement of Chigaku's prominent disciple, Yamakawa Chiō, he then resigned from the public school teaching post that he had held for eight years, becoming a "professor" for what the Risshō Ankokukai called the Honge Daigaku Junbikai (group for the preparation of a university of our sect). This position in practice meant that he acted as a lecturer and general manager of the Tokyo

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1904 and Yamakawa Chiō recorded the lectures. The originally five volumes of text were published as the *Myōshū shikimoku Kōgiroku* between 1904 and 1910. The volumes were republished as the *Nichirenshugi kyōgi taikan* in 1915. See entry on "Myōshū shikimoku Kōgiroku," in *Shin Miyazawa Kenji goi jiten* [new glossarial dictionary of Miyazawa Kenji], ed. Hara Shirō (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 2000), 691.

offices of the Risshō Ankokokukai, which became the Kokuchūkai in 1914.[15]

In the posthumously discovered notebook that he used to write perhaps his most famous poem "Ame ni mo makezu" (Undaunted by the rain), Miyazawa wrote that Takachio suggested that he write a "*Lotus* literature" (*Hokke no bungaku*). There is a reason to doubt the truthfulness of this statement because Takachio himself later did not remember ever discussing literature with Miyazawa.[16] What is certain is that Miyazawa's interaction with Takachio and other Kokuchūkai members during his time in Tokyo had significant impact on his writing. This is despite the fact that it is unlikely that Miyazawa ever actually met Chigaku, who himself was an amateur playwright. Miyazawa's time in Tokyo corresponded with an intense bout of writing on his part, a kind of writing that was the first expression of the more idiosyncratic aspects of his art.[17]

Miyazawa maintained a relationship through correspondence with Takachio for the rest of his life, as evidenced by a letter he wrote the Kokuchūkai lecturer in 1933. In the brief note he mentions his illness and respectfully promises to do his best to recover.[18]

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[15] biographical sketch, see Hara, entry on "Takachio Chiyō."
[16] Strong, "The Poetry of", 70.
[17] Cf., Strong, "The Poetry of," 71-73 and Ishikawa, 221-2.
[18] Miyazawa Zenshū (Tokyo: Chikuma Bunsho, 1986-1994),Vol. 9, 546.

However, Miyazawa left Tokyo in August 1921 and never made the city his residence again. The recurrence of his beloved sister's illness ultimately prompted his departure, but his fervent desire to convert his family to Nichirenshugi beliefs had begun to wane slightly by the previous month, prompting perhaps a rapprochement with them. [19] The precise nature of Miyazawa's relationship with Tanaka Chigaku and the Kokuchūkai thereafter remains somewhat in dispute among scholars and others.[20] At one extreme, is Tanaka Chigaku's granddaughter Ōhashi Fujiko. She holds that despite Miyazawa's separation from Kokuchūkai activities after moving back to Hanamaki, he never separated himself from the group in his heart. She claims that his literary work and attempts at social activism are evidence for this.[21] She also argues that "egoistic nationalism" is not consistent with the true teachings of her grandfather's aim to establish the "moral nation" of Japan as a Buddha-realm in accordance with Nichiren's prophetic vision.[22]

Ōhashi's evaluation of Miyazawa's relationship with the Kokuchūkai after 1921 is diametrically opposed to that of intellectuals such as the philosopher Tsurumi Shunsuke and the

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[19] Strong, "The Poetry of," 73.
[20] Hara, "Tanaka Chigaku," 452-453 and "Takachio Chiyō," 444.
[21] Ōhashi Fujiko *Miyazawa Kenji: Makoto no ai* [Miyazawa Kenji: True love] (Tokyo: Shinsekaisha, 1996), 156.
[22] Ibid., 152.

editors of a 1990 special issue of *Bukkyō* (Buddhism). The journal volume's opening piece is a roundtable featuring Tsurumi, Kyōtō University clinical psychologist Kawai Hayao and the editors, Yoshimoto Taka'aki, Yamaori Tetsuo and Komatsu Kazuhiko. In the discussion Tsurumi proclaims that although Miyazawa had great enthusiasm for the Kokuchūkai, he broke with the group completely and as a result his literature had no connection with Tanaka Chigaku. Tsurumi reasons that Miyazawa once admired Chigaku because he was "sort of fresh from the country, he didn't know anything, and obviously he just ate that stuff up." The editors agree with Tsurumi that the Kokuchūkai and Chigaku had no relationship to Miyazawa's work.[23]

It is not surprising that in the fourteen articles that follow this opening talk mention Chigaku and the Kokuchūkai only once. The articles tend to refer to a timeless dehistoricized Buddhism's relationship with Miyazawa. These intellectuals from a variety of fields thus replicate the tendency of several prewar and wartime "fascist" intellectuals, who had much in common with the Kokuchūkai and its leaders. In short, the writings collected in this special edition of *Bukkyō* conceive of cultural forms such as

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[23] "Miyazawa Kenji: burakku bokksu no kaidoku" [Miyazawa Kenji: deciphering a black box] in Bukkyō [Buddhism] vol. 13, no. 10 (1990), Tokushū [special edition] = Miyazawa Kenji, 14-34, 30, 31.

Buddhism and Japan in almost precisely the same way that early-1940s and earlier modern Japanese intellectuals conceived the very same timeless essences in their "ultranationalist" willed ignorance of history.[24]

Judgments that Miyazawa essentially remained a Chigaku-inspired Nichirenist depend upon an apologist defense of the Kokuchūkai, while claims that Miyazawa became completely estranged from the group are integrally related to an attempt to condemn the group. Both judgments are grounded in misrecognition of the fact that from a pre-1933 perspective Miyazawa and Japanese society in general did not regard the Kokuchūkai's views as abhorrent. In fact, prewar liberals and anti-imperialists around the globe (especially those enamored with the "mysteries of the East") were just as likely to praise the Kokuchūkai as they were to condemn it. This is not so much because they failed to see the truth, but because historical judgment had not yet created the truth that the Kokuchūkai was abhorrent.

[24] See in particular Kino Ichirō, "Miyazawa Kenji to Hokkekyō" (Miyazawa Kenji and the *Lotus Sūtra*) 80-85, 83, where the author states that in his opinion "Miyazawa, Nichiren, and the thirteenth-century founder of the Sōtō Zen sect Dōgen were three Japanese who understood the universal idea of this unique sutra (the *Lotus*)." Kino ignores the differences in historical context between modern Miyazawa and the medieval sect founders.

Paradoxically, by understanding the Kokuchūkai in a more historically contextualized way it will be possible to understand ways how the problems we tend to associate with a bygone prewar period are still very much with us. In the remaining sections of this chapter I will analyze some key elements of Miyazawa's work in order to show connections between what Miyazawa's fans have tended to praise in his fiction, on the one hand, and key concepts disseminated by Chigaku and the Kokuchūkai, on the other. In so doing I will address the way that Miyazawa and Nichirenism are mutually emblematic of the problematic character of the modern condition.

Haru to Shura and the Freedom to Transform

"Haru to shura" (春と修羅 Spring and asura, published in 1924) is one of Miyazawa's paradigmatic poetic works. It is subtitled "Mental Sketch Modified" in Japanized English, the idea of a mental sketch signified Miyazawa's personal poetic methodology. This methodology consisted of wandering through Iwate's countryside, "jotting down notes on his thoughts and impressions" during these extended strolls."[25] While on these walks Miyazawa experienced an ecstatic "breakdown" or "dissolution" of his personality.[26] Later, he would modify the written sketches that resulted. In other words he

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[25]Strong, "The Poetry, "133.
[26] Ibid., 232-3.

would revise them, crafting them into works of colloquial, free-verse poetry. Secondly "Haru to shura," with its methodological subtitle, is also paradigmatic because it served as the title piece for the three volume collection of poetry, *Haru to shura*, which Miyazawa wrote and published at his own expense during a period spanning most of his adult life. This is an excerpt from the poem:

> Out of the mind's steel-gray images / 心象のはひろはがねから
> Akebia tendrils entwine the clouds, / あけびのつるはくものからまり
> Tangle of wild rose and humus marsh; / のばらのやぶや腐植の湿地
> Over everything everywhere, flattery's twisted pattern / いちめんのいちめんの曲諂模様
> (when, more dense than woodwind music at noon fragments of amber pour down) / （正午の管楽よりもしげく琥珀のかけらかそそぐとき）
> The bitterness and blueness of anger! / いかりのにがさまた青さ
> At the bottom of the light of April's atmospheric strata spitting gnashing, pacing / 四月の気層のひかりの底を唾しはぎしりゆききする
> I am an asura / おれはひとりの修羅なのだ
> (the landscape quakes in my tears) / （風景はなみだにゆすれ）
> Shattered clouds as far as the eye can see / 砕ける雲の眼路をがきり
> Holy crystal winds traverse
> The radiant sea of heaven / 聖玻璃の風が生き交ひ れいろうの天の海には
> ZYPRESSEN, a row of spring / ZYPRESSEN春のいちれつ
> Blackly inhale ether
> Through their somber trunks / くろぐろと光素

［エーテル］を吸ひ
その暗い脚並からは
Shines the snowy edge of the Mountains of Heaven / 天山の雪の稜さへひかるのに
(shimmer of heat haze, white polarized light) / （かげろふの波と白い偏光）
but the true words are lost / まことのことばはうしなはれ
Clouds tear apart, flying across the sky / 雲はちぎれてそらをとぶ
Ahhh, through the depths of glittering April
Gnashing, burning, pacing / ああかがやきの四月の底
をはぎしりもえてゆききする
I am an asura / おれはひとりの修羅なのだ[27]

"I am an asura" is an ontological statement, one grounded in Miyazawa's reading of Tanaka Chigaku's *Taikan* and Chigaku's interpretation there of Nichiren's *Kaimokushō* and other writings. According to various forms of Mahayana Buddhist teachings including those of Nichiren there are six realms of existence in the degraded sphere of transmigration and ignorance. These realms are those of: (1) hell-dwellers, (2) animals, (3) hungry ghosts or those who can never be satisfied, (4) asuras, (5) humans, and (6) divinities. Above these six realms there are the realms of private buddhas and voice-hearers. These two categories refer to practitioners of Theravada Buddhism. They are pejorative names from the Māhayana

[27] The poem is translated in full in Strong, "The Poetry," 125, and I am using the Japanese text collected in *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* vol. 1, 29-32.

(“greater-vehicle”) perspective for those who practice Hinayana (“lesser-vehicle”) Buddhism. Bodhisattvas exist in the next higher realm. A bodhisattva is an ideal practitioner of Māhayana Buddhism, a figure who refuses to become a Buddha, but instead chooses to compassionately work for the salvation of others. The tenth and final realm is that of the Buddha. An *asura* (*shura* in Japanese) is comparable to the titans of Greek mythology who battle the Olympian divinities. Asuras in ancient India’s Vedic literature fight divinities such as Indra, but Māhayana Buddhism assimilated the concept of asuras and in Nichiren’s thought they are the occupants of one of the six lower realms of existence.

Chigaku’s *Taikan* particularly emphasizes the concept of *ichinen sanzen* (一念三千). According to the philosophy developed in Tendai/Nichiren thought, the basic ten realms of existence can be divided into three-thousand mutually interpenetrating realms and sub-realms of existence. *Ichinen sanzen* means that the three-thousand (*sanzen*) realms coexist in one moment of thought (*ichinen*). In more elaborate cosmological schemes Tiantai, Tendai, and Nichiren Buddhisms break the ten realms explained above into ten thousand sub-realms. Thus *ichinen sanzen* means that in one moment of personal thought, in a monadic way, the entirety of spatial-temporal reality is involved. The implication is that all the various realms are

constantly interpenetrating at every imaginable level. What this interpenetration of the ten realms or *jūkaigogū* (十界互具) means ultimately is that an ordinary person attached to worldly desires is immediately the Buddha and that the Buddha is immediately an ordinary person attached to worldly desires (*butsu soku bonpu*, *bonpu soku butsu*).[28] According to Saitō Bun'ichi Miyazawa became attached to the idea that an asura can also become a Buddha when he first read the *Taikan* in the period between 1919 and 1921. In this connection Saitō cites a letter Miyazawa wrote to a friend in 1919 in which he proclaimed that his "true name" was "asura of the human world that attains Buddhahood."[29]

The idea that the ordinary person or an asura is immediately the same as the Buddha correlates with the idea that the external world too can be transformed. In "Haru to shura" this idea is actualized in the transformation of conventional reality into a phantasmagoric surrealism. Thus akebia tendrils "entwine clouds," fragments of amber with the density of woodwind music pour down, "holy winds traverse the radiant sea of heaven," *Zypressen* (German

[28] Saitō Bun'ichi, *Miyazawa Kenji: Shijigenron no tenkai* [Miyazawa Kenji: the development of a four dimensional theory] (Tokyo: Kokubunsha, 1991), 132. In the *Taikan* see in particular vol. III., "Taikō mon," 1634-1645.
[29] Letter no. 165, *Miyazawa Kenji Zenshū* vol. 9, 231. Quoted in Saitō, 133.

for Cypress trees) “blackly inhale ether,” and the poet himself is transformed into a gnashing, spitting, pacing asura whose anger is blue and who has the landscape quaking in his tears. The world is transformable in Miyazawa’s literature. Reality is transformed. It is perpetually in a state of transformation.

Miyazawa intended to emphasize that even the experience of oneself as demonic was from an ultimate perspective the same as being the essence and substance of the Buddha. Because of this it is important to underscore the promise of profound liberation in the work of Miyazawa. To put it simply, his poems and stories stimulate his audiences to imagine the world as otherwise. In an expression of *ichinen sanzen*, Miyazawa suggests that despite appearances in any given moment a human being is also a Buddha and an asura. This in turn suggests that despite appearances of the permanence of conditions in any given time or place, it is possible to change those conditions. Socially, politically, and economically this implies that oppressive realities are not permanent or ordained by divine forces. In short, they can be changed. Miyazawa denied his status as a conventional human being in his poetry and in this he implicitly argued that the external or social world can always be changed because it too is not fixed in any necessary sense.

In some of his children's stories and poetry he also created, for example, a semi-imaginary space that he sometimes called Īhatovu. This word refers to the setting of his work as a place that is both imaginary and real at the same time. The fact that it sounds like "Iwate" is not an accident (the difference between "ha" and "wa" being negligible in Japanese). In an advertisement for a collection of stories he published he called Īhatovu "dreamland Iwate." At the same time he wrote that it was the site of the adventures of Lewis Carroll's Alice, in that it encompassed the fictional Tepantar Desert of Tagore's poetry, and that it was the site of the kingdom of Ivan in Tolstoy's "Tale of Ivan the Fool."[30] One of the more interesting etymological hypotheses about Īhatovu, or "Īhatovo" as Miyazawa sometimes wrote it, is that it is derived from the German phrase, "*Ich weiss nicht wo*" (I know not where).[31] One can say that Īhatovu exists nowhere and precisely because of this it can exist as a realm of possibility that is everywhere, despite the fact that Miyazawa identified it particularly with the site of his immediate experience, Iwate Prefecture. Īhatovu is only one name for and set of imaginary spaces that Miyazawa constructed. He sometimes termed such spaces more generally *i-kūkan* (異空間 other spaces). He depicts the most

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30 *Miyazawa zenshū*, vol. 8, 602-603.
31 Hara, entry on "Ihatovo," 59-60.

famous of his “other spaces” in the sophisticated children’s story, *The Night of the Milky way Railway*.

Ginga Tetsudō no yoru

The Night of the Milky Way Railway (Ginga tetsudō no yoru) is Miyazawa’s longest story and perhaps his most popular work. It was discovered among the vast unpublished material he left behind when he died in 1933, and was published in 1934.[32] It is the story of Giovanni, a young boy from a town for the most part like Miyazawa’s native Hanamaki. On the night of a festival dedicated to the Centaurus constellation, Giovanni sits on a hill with a strange “weather wheel pillar” behind a dairy where he suddenly sees a strange train coming. He hears a conductor calling out, “Milky Way Station.” He next finds himself riding on the train with his friend Campanella, whose jacket is curiously wet. The boys soon realize that they are riding across the galaxy on the train. Miyazawa represents the galaxy as a river upon which the train travels. This is related to the fact that the Milky Way is called Ginga in Japanese and this means “silver river.” It is also called the “river of heaven” (Ama no Kawa) and Miyazawa sometimes uses this name for the galaxy as well.

[32] Scholars assume that Miyazawa was working on the story during the last years of his life. See Strong, “The Poetry of,” 119.

The boys make several stops and meet various interesting characters on the train as they pass a number of uncommon places and stations that correspond to constellations and other bodies in outer space. They pass for example an observatory at the constellation of Beta Cygni, which Miyazawa calls by its Arabic name Albireo. They make a stop at Aquila Station, which corresponds to the constellation of that name. They pass a place resembling the Colorado plateau where they hear Dvorzak's "New World Symphony." At this point they also see the Sagittarius (archer) constellation, which they take to be a Native American with a bow on horseback. One particularly interesting character they meet is a man whose job is catching wild geese that resemble chocolate in texture and taste. The last set of Giovanni's and Campanella's fellow travelers are three victims of the recent sinking of the Titanic, a little boy, a little girl and a young man. The three speak about their ship hitting an iceberg, they were forced into the cold water where they apparently drowned. They are also Christian Westerners with Japanese names. The Christians get off to find their heaven at the Southern Cross, leaving the boys alone to proceed towards their own destination.

The train then nears a black nebula called the Coal Sack. A black nebula is the site of a large amount of interstellar dust that

absorbs light because of its gravity. The Coal Sack, visible from Earth's southern hemisphere, appears like a window of darkness in the Milky Way.[33] At first the Coal Sack seems frighteningly cold and empty, but Giovanni declares that in the interests of "the happiness of everyone" he would not be afraid to be right in the middle of the dark void of the nebula. Campanella then sees beautiful fields and his deceased mother in the dark void. Campanella says he wants to go there. Giovanni sees nothing but as he looks out the window he reiterates that he wants to come along. When Giovanni turns to where his friend was sitting in the galactic train, however, his friend is no longer there. An anguished Giovanni cries out in tears. Suddenly there is darkness and when Giovanni can see again he realizes he has been dreaming. After collecting milk from the dairy for his mother he walks towards the river in the center of town where he sees a commotion. Giovanni soon realizes that Campanella has drowned. A discussion with Giovanni's father reveals to Giovanni that his own father, who had been in prison, is on his way home.

As with many of Miyazawa's works, Chigaku's thought informs particular elements of *The Night of the Milky Way Railroad*. In a section of the *Taikan* on the concept of *fushaku shinmyō*

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[33] Strong, "The Reader's Guide" in Miyazawa Kenji, *The Night of the Milky Way Railway*, Strong trans (New York: 1991), 117.

(不惜身命 not begrudging one's bodily life) Chigaku discusses an esoteric interpretation of the *Lotus Sūtra*'s eleventh "Beholding the Appearance of the Jeweled Stupa" chapter (見宝塔品 kenhōtō bon). In the chapter, while Śākyamuni Buddha is preaching the *Lotus* sermon to a myriad of beings, a stupa (塔 *tō*, a reliquary or pagoda) that is covered with jewels appears from out of the earth. Śākyamuni says that this is the stupa of a buddha named Tahō Nyorai (abundant treasures) who made a vow in eons past that whenever a buddha preaches the *Lotus Sūtra* he would reappear.

It is important to note that according to the Nichirenist interpretation of the sutra, Tahō and Śākyamuni are actually one in the same. Tahō is a past existence of the Buddha and one that now generally abides outside of the world as we know it. Śākyamuni in the *Lotus* is or was the present temporary incarnation of the Buddha in our degraded or *saha* world (娑婆世界 *shaba sekai*). Both Tahō and Śākyamuni are emanations of the original eternal Buddha whose complete identity with Śākyamuni is later revealed in the *Lotus*' sixteenth, "Nyorai juryō hon" (Fathoming the lifespan) chapter. In other words, as Chigaku indicates at another point in the *Taikan*, Tahō represents a relatively static and eternal place of truth (*seiteki rikyō*), while Śākyamuni represents the dynamic knowledge (*dōteki*

chi) of living beings,[34] and the permanent unity of the two is expounded in the "Nyorai juryō hon."

The last part of the "Beholding the Appearance of the Jeweled Stupa" chapter is key to the way that Chigaku interpretation of it in terms of *fushaku shinmyō*. In accordance with Tahō's original vow, when he appears in his stupa that rises from the earth, Śākyamuni is supposed to assemble all the innumerable buddhas that reside in various directions to the place where he is preaching in our degraded world. As he does so, he transforms this world into a pure and wonderful place. Śākyamuni then opens the pagoda doors and reveals Tahō. Tahō next invites the Śākyamuni to sit with him in the Pagoda. Śākyamuni agrees and in order that the *Lotus* sermon's vast audience can better join with the two thus enthroned Buddhas, Śākyamuni and Tahō cause the assembly to rise up with them into the sky. The assembly stays there in the sky from the end of the chapter until chapter 22. The assembly of the various buddhas and others in the sky is called the *kokū-e* (assembly in the empty sky 虚空会).

As Saitō Bun'ichi points out, in *Taikan* Chigaku cites a *kūden* or a medieval apocryphal esoteric oral transmission that has been circulated within Nichiren/Tendai circles and attributed to

[34] Saitō, 123.

Nichiren (that was subsequently written down and made available to people like Chigaku in modern times). The quotation states:

> The 'Beholding the Appearance of the Jeweled Stupa' [chapter] states that we are one body. Existing in middle of emptiness/middle of the sky [空中 *kūchū*] means that we living things pass away and return in the end. Today Nichiren's fellows worship by chanting *namu myōhō rengekyō* [hail to the *Lotus Sūtra* of the wonderful law] and in their true heart and mind where they exist in emptiness; they exist in the assembly in the empty sky [虚空会 *kokū-e*].[35]

In his commentary on the passage Chigaku explains that there are two kinds of self, one of which lives and then dies as a material being. This first kind of self corresponds with the this-worldly emanation of the Buddha, Śākyamuni, who was born and who died. Then Chigaku writes that if one is willing to offer one's bodily life in protecting or adhering to the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* in the spirit of not begrudging one's bodily life or *fushaku shinmyō*, then another self perpetually resides in the middle of emptiness. This self second kind of self neither lives nor dies in a conventional sense. This ever-abiding self corresponds with the buddha Tahō in the "Beholding the Appearance of the Jeweled Stupa" chapter. One whose actions are imbued with the spirit of *fushaku shinmyō* abides then, according to

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[35] Tanaka Chigaku, *Nichirenshugi kyōgi taikan* (Tokyo: Kokusho Kōkankai, 1975), 2974. Quoted also in Saitō, 204.

Chigaku, in an eternally pure and blessed state not unlike that of Tahō in his jeweled Stupa.

Saitō points out two further practical examples of what Chigaku meant by *fushaku shinmyō*, both of which are related to the work of Miyazawa in general, and *The Night of the Milky Way Railroad* in particular. The first is Chigaku's concept of a "dying act" (*rinjū jōrei*) done in the spirit of *fushaku shinmyō*. Tanaka assured his readers that such a dying act would expiate one of all past wrongdoing.[36] Such an act appears in Miyazawa's story when the train passes the constellation of Scorpio. At this time one of the children from the Titanic recounts the story of a scorpion that lives by eating smaller insects. The scorpion becomes the prey of a weasel, but before being caught falls into a well. Unable to escape, the scorpion laments:

> I can't even remember the number of lives I have taken before today. And now when this self same "I" was about to be caught by a weasel, what an effort I made to escape. Yet look what has become of me in the end. Truly, everything in life is uncertain. Oh, why did I not offer my own body without complaint to the weasel? Had I done so, the weasel would have extended its life for one more day. Please, God, look into my heart. In my next life let me not throw my life away in vain like this, but rather, use my body for the true happiness of everyone.[37]

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[36] Saitō, 205. *Taikan*, 2981.
[37] Strong, *The Night,* 69. *Miyazawa Kenji Zenshū*, vol. 7, 286-288.

On saying this prayer, "the scorpion sees his own body burn, becoming a beautiful crimson fire that lit up the darkness of the night" as the Scorpio constellation.[38] In this way, the past "crimes" of the scorpion lead to his willingness to give his body so as to bring the beauty of his light as a constellation in the sky to others and this constitutes an extremely noble act on the part of the scorpion.

At the point in *The Night of the Milky Way Railway* when the train approaches the Coal Sack black nebula and before Campanella sees his mother's image within it, Giovanni says "even if I were in the middle of that huge darkness, I wouldn't be afraid …. I really am going to go and search for the true happiness of everyone."[39] This is a pledge that Giovanni makes with the spirit of *fushaku shinmyō* and it has much in common with the scorpion's desire to have his body be of value to others. However, unlike the scorpion and Campanella, Giovanni does not lose his life as conventionally defined. He does not stay in the thoroughly transfixed world of the Milky Way either. Miyazawa was suggesting that there are deep connections between the everyday world (Giovanni's village), the world of possibility that opens up when conventional identity, rationality or common sense breaks down (the Milky Way), and the absolutely mysterious void of death as conventionally defined (the Coal Sack). Thus, even though

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Strong, *The Night*, 76. *Miyazawa Kenji Zenshū*, vol. 7, 293.

Campanella dies he has not completely left Giovanni. Miyazawa implies a fundamental connection between the everyday world of Giovanni's village, fantastic world of the Milky Way, and the world of the dead or the Coal Sack Nebula that is Campanella's final destination.

The model for the interrelationship between the fantastic realm of the Milky Way and normal reality is the "assembly in the empty sky" or *kokū-e* in the *Lotus Sūtra* as interpreted by Chigaku. Importantly, in the sutra, the original site of Śākyamuni's sermon, sacred vulture peak or Ryūjuzen (霊鷲山) in India, is itself already a transformed time and place. The level of unconventionality or enchantment at Ryūjuzen in the sutra corresponds, I would argue, to a Japanese village where children have non-Japanese names like Giovanni and Campanella. Just the fact or realization that there is a relationship between this world and one where normally impossible things are possible (the Milky Way or the site of the *kokū-e*) changed, for Miyazawa and Chigaku, the nature of this mundane world. Miyazawa's story signifies the transformability of the mundane world as both immanent and imminent. For both Miyazawa and Chigaku Losing oneself as that self is normally constituted in the spirit of *fushaku shinmyō* was the key to a more general and permanent transformation of the real world. In other words, *fushaku shinmyō*

was requisite, as they saw it, in order to make the supposedly imminent and immanent presence of the Buddha manifest and real in the here and now.

Miyazawa uses an image that brings to mind the jeweled stupa of the *Lotus Sūtra* to connect the world of Giovanni's village and the other world of the Milky Way and beyond. Before Giovanni hears the Milky Way Railroad's conductor yells "Milky Way Station" and just before he finds himself aboard the galactic train he notices what the text refers to as a weather wheel pillar (*tenkirin no hashira*). The author describes it as flickering "on and off like a firefly."[40] The meaning of this weather wheel pillar of is one of the more hotly debated questions in the study of Miyazawa's work. Arguments often begin with the idea that the weather wheel pillar has to do with Buddhism, that it is an apparent allusion to the wheel of the dharma (法輪 *hōrin*), which is a very common symbol of various Buddhist teachings. Saitō suggests however that the weather wheel pillar is an allusion to the jeweled stupa from the *Lotus Sūtra*'s eleventh chapter.[41] This suggestion is not contrary to more common theories centering on the notion that the weather wheel pillar is an "Eliadean-style *axis mundi*, a point of convergence between the other world and

[40] Strong, *The Night*, 25. *Miyazawa Kenji Zenshū*, vol. 7, 248-249.
[41] Saitō, 205.

this."[42] In a way related to the concept of an *axis mundi*, the appearance of the stupa in the *Lotus* initiates the "complete rupture in the middle of the everyday world" that "reveals a newly magnificent space-time."[43]

This sense of rupture in the middle of mundane existence is characteristic of almost all of Miyazawa's work. His forte was to show us the relationship between an everyday world outside of our immediate control and the transformed and transformable world of his imagination. These worlds of rupture frequently combine or overthrow conventional oppositions between "East" and "West." For example, the Japanese children in *The Night of the Milky Way Railroad* have Italian names, and the Christian survivors of the Titanic have Japanese names. The ruptures and transformations within Miyazawa's work are also notably characteristic of early twentieth-century, global literary modernism.[44] That the author

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[42] Strong, "Reader's Guide," 93.
[43] Saitō, 110.
[44] As Harootunian has notes in *Overcome by Modernity*'s introduction, "there are as many definitions and explanations of modernism as there are people willing to speak about it" (xx). Despite ambiguities, I believe that the concept is necessary and useful when, for example, discussing global literary trends valorizing the breakdown of the rationality commonly associated with processes of modernization. For a historical account of the complexities of modernism in the European context, see chapter two, "Modernity and Modernism," in David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 1990). See especially 28-29, where Harvey discusses post-1848 challenges to the "categorical fixity of

combined this literary modernist sensibility with Nichirenist Buddhism was itself a kind of rupture of the boundaries of common sense in a world where many people continue to conceptually insist upon clear distinctions between the Oriental and the Occidental.

In this regard, tellingly, Miyazawa also expressed his sense of sites or times of rupture in the German language in his poem "Koiwai Nōjō" (Koiwai farm). In the poem Miyazawa calls the time and place of a rupture with everyday experience at a cooperative farm in Morioka, Iwate "*der heilge punkt*" (the holy point). In the time and space of rupture with reality as conventionally defined in this poem, Kenji consorts with children from ancient Buddhist paintings that modern archeologists had recently unearthed from the sands of Central Asia. Normal conceptions of time, space, and the difference between representation and reality are completely torn apart here in what can additionally be seen as a representation of the notion of *ichinen-sanzen*. In this context all imaginable realms or realities (*sanzen*) are manifest for the poet in a single "holy point."[45]

Enlightenment thought." For a disapproving account of a tendency among modernist writers such as Robert Musil, Joyce, and Kafka towards "flight into psychopathology" see Georg Lukacs, "The Ideology of Modernism" in *Marxist Literary Theory*, ed. Terry Eagleton and Drew Milne (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1996), especially, 150-51.

[45] Cf., Saitō, 128.

Besides his concept of a "dying act" Chigaku also wrote in the *Taikan* of another quality of *fushaku shinmyō*, terming it *honji gōdan* (本時郷団a loose translation would be: "at the present time all together in unity"). Chigaku explicitly connected the term to the idea of constructing an ideal world. It would be a "this-worldly land of tranquil light" (*sekai no jakkō-do*). In this world, Chigaku wrote, Buddhist teachings or Buddhist law (*hō*, Skt., dharma) and people will live in harmony with each other. Morality and daily life (*seikatsu*) would also be in harmony. In short, religious faith and peoples' way of life would be united as Chigaku believed was requisite in our present degenerate age of *Mappō*. Chigaku moreover mentions that although he looked for a suitable place for his "religious colonists" (*shūkyō shokumin)* to settle in the Izu region the previous year (1901 or 1902) but he could not find one. He also mentions that Hokkaidō, Taiwan or Korea might offer a place suitable for his plans.[46]

Everything that is material such as one's body itself, in Chigaku's vision of communitarian *fushaku shinmyō*, is to be offered or sacrificed to the dharma. That is to say that it is to be given up in the interest of the community. In this context, Chigaku wrote that "*the spirit of not begrudging one's bodily life* [fushaku shinmyō] *is to*

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[46] *Taikan*, 2982.

have the heart/mind that returns to the original ground of the absolute original truth."[47] In Chigaku's ideal Buddhist community of the future he seems to have projected a rupture with the ego as conventionally constituted this is deeply related to the forms of rupture Miyazawa depicted in his work.

But Chigaku usually excelled at inspiring people to act, while on the other hand he was relatively weak at acting in historically decisive ways himself. In other words, Chigaku's concepts remained largely virtual. Others, such as Miyazawa, tried to put them more concretely into practice. Towards the end of his life Miyazawa attempted to devote his life to assisting the poor peasants of his home prefecture. In the spirit of *fushaku shinmyō* Miyazawa tried to actualize the "this-worldly land of tranquil light" that Chigaku had written about. What follows is a discussion of Nichirenism's connections to Miyazawa's attempts at social reform.

***Nōmin geijutsuron* and the Rasu Chijin Kyōkai**

When Miyazawa returned to Hanamaki from Tokyo in 1921 he accepted a teaching job at a local two-year agricultural school.[48] Over the ensuing years he continued writing and published *Spring and Asura* while teaching. He also published a collection of stories, *The Restaurant of Many Orders* (*Chūmon no ōi ryōriten,* 1924) and a

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[47] *Taikan*, 2982-3, emphasis in original.
[48] Strong, "The Poetry of," 74.

few pieces in periodicals, but he met with no commercial success and little critical acclaim. By 1924 he became very frustrated with his life. Miyazawa began to imagine the possibility of a new kind of art that was more connected to the common people of his native region. He quit his teaching job in 1926 and at about the same time he penned a short three part work, the "Nōmin geijutsu gainen ron" (On the general concept of peasant art), "Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō" (An outline of the elements of peasant art) and "Nōmin geijutsu no kōryū" (The flourishing of peasant art). "Nōmin geijutsu gainen ron" is a table of contents for and a set of notes. "Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō" is the main part of the three. "Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyrū" is a rather ungrammatical and unclear extrapolation on one section of "Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō."[49]

Miyazawa's attempt to disseminate his ideas among Iwate's peasants began soon after he resigned his teaching position. During the first three months of 1926 Miyazawa gave a two part lecture at the school where he had been working titled "Nōmin no geijutsu ron" (On peasant art) as part of an Iwate Prefecture Citizen's Higher School sponsored adult education program. In April 1926 Miyazawa

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[49] Hara, "Nōmin geijutsu," 555. I have referred to the versions of the Nōmin geijutsu works collected in the *Miyazawa Zenshū* vol. 10, 15-32. There is an English translation of the work in the appendix of Mallory Fromm, *Miyazawa no risō* [Miyazawa's ideal] (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 1996). My translations differ slightly from Fromm's.

began to periodically host about twenty students at his newly independent residence. He saw this as a continuation of the themes he had addressed with his "Nōmin no geijutsu ron" lecture. At the time Miyazawa had also just moved to a house owned by his family, a moderate distance from them in Shimoneko, an agricultural area of Hanamaki. Miyazawa's ideal was to realize harmony between an agriculturally productive life and cultural fulfillment. Thus, in addition to reclaiming land along the local river, Miyazawa's group listened to records, began practicing as a small musical ensemble, learned about agricultural science from Miyazawa, and engaged in various cultural activities.

The group that met at Miyazawa's residence formed the kernel of what he eventually called the Rasu Chijin Kyōkai (羅須地人協会 Rasu Peasant Cooperative Association[50]) and the set of documents he previously authored bearing on the question of peasant art reflects the conceptual basis for Miyazawa's activities with the group. The opening section of "Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō" states that "[l]iving properly and strongly means having an awareness of the Milky Way galaxy within oneself …. Let us seek

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[50] It is impossible to translate "rasu" in the name of the association Miyazawa formed. Its meaning is ambiguous and this is something I will address more fully below.

the true world's happiness."[51] The reference to the Milky Way is clearly a reference to the "newly magnificent space time" represented in *Night of the Milky Way Railway*. The Milky Way within each of us then also stands for the site of the *Lotus Sūtra*'s "assembly in the empty sky." In this we can see that once again when Miyazawa invokes a desire to seek the true happiness of everyone, he is expressing a desire to actualize the ideal world that Chigaku describes as a "this-worldly land of ever-tranquil light."

The rest of the content of Miyazawa's literature on peasant art centers on the dissolution of the oppositions between work, art, and religiosity. At one point within "Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō" Miyazawa writes for example that

> professional artists will one day cease to exist
> Let everyone adapt an artist-like sensibility […]
> We are, each of us, artists at one time or another
> Action is concentrated in creation when that creation wells up spontaneously and ceaselessly […]
> Myriad of geniuses of differing characteristics should stand together
> Thus the surface of the earth will also become heaven[52]

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[51] *Miyazawa Zenshū* vol. 10, 19. Fromm, ii. Translation altered because Fromm translates Gingakei (銀河系) as "galactic system." I choose to render it "Milky Way galaxy." A literal translation would be "silver river galaxy," but "Ginga" is a proper name and its standard translation is "Milky Way," which is the English proper name of the same galaxy.
[52] *Miyazawa Zenshū* vol. 10, 23-24. Fromm iv.

In sum, Miyazawa's plan to convert the world of poor Iwate peasants into "heaven" involved peasants themselves rejoicing in making their own songs, literature, music, dramatic works, movies, sculpture, photography, and culinary arts. The peasants would also conduct lectures for each other, make clothes, care for forests and gardens, manufacture goods, and engage in healthy competitive games.[53]

"Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō" also displays a romantic longing for an unrealistically idyllic past when it decries that, "today we have only work and existence." This is because, the text continues, unlike "our ancestors" who "at one time lived joyfully while being poor" "we" have lost art and religion. Miyazawa furthermore decried the "fact" that religion had been replaced by science and the "wretchedly decadent" state of contemporary art.[54] At the same time, far from expressing a desire to escape modernity into a Japanese past, Miyazawa praises the thought of Daniel Dafoe, Oscar Wilde, William Morris, Tolstoy, Emerson Spengler, Wagner Cezanne, Manet and Georg Büchner.

Miyazawa officially founded the Rasu Chijin Kyōkai in August 1926. The upshot of the group's story is that it failed to improve the lot of those he most intended to help. Miyazawa himself took up farming after moving to his solitary residence, but this did

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[53] Hara, "Nōmingeijutsu," 556.
[54] *Miyazawa Kenji Zenshū*, 19. Fromm ii.

little to ensure his acceptance among the established farmers in the region. In short, none of the practical projects that Miyazawa and his close associates planned in an effort to better the lot of peasants succeeded and the organization ceased to function in any meaningful sense by early 1927. By 1928 he began to show signs of a recurrence of the tuberculosis that he probably first contracted at the age of 18 following surgery to treat a nasal condition.[55]

Miyazawa's health waxed and waned over the next few years. In February 1931 he felt healthy enough to take work as a fertilizer salesman. In September of the same year he fell ill on a business trip to Tokyo.[56] Miyazawa never fully recovered. He spent the next couple of years mostly rewriting his earlier work. He died in September of 1933. His dying wish was for his father to print a thousand copies of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which he asked to be given to his friends after his death. He requested his father to dedicate the copies with an inscription stating that the young writer's life work had been to disseminate the sutra.

Space-Time, History and Spiritual Photography

The space-time of the Milky Way in Miyazawa's story, the experience of space and time as communicated in Miyazawa's poetry when for example he proclaimed "I am an asura," and the ideal world

[55] Strong, "The Poetry," 39.
[56] Ibid., 109-110.

that Miyazawa attempted to actualize when putting the principles of peasant art into practice have a common logic. In this logic opposed or contradictory terms are not resolved in a higher synthetic unity but are neutralized. For example, Giovanni and Campanella do not become Italian because of their names. However, they are not simply "Japanese" as conventionally defined. That is they are A (Japanese), B (not Japanese), both A and B (Japanese and not Japanese) and neither A (Japanese) nor B (not Japanese). The same can be said of the poet as asura: he is an asura, he is a human, he is both asura and human, and he is neither asura nor human. This is the kind of state that Giovanni and Campanella enter when their train begins its journey across the Milky Way. The story opens with a scene at the boys' school. Their teacher explains precisely what the galaxy is from the perspective of science, namely stars in outer space. When the boys are in the train, however, the galaxy is also literally the river of heaven or the silver river. The universe mapped by science shares an ontological equality with universes of other modes of understanding reality, such as ones that perceive the Milky Way as a river of heaven, a silver river, or a flow of milk.

My presentation of the logic in question is indebted to what scholars call Nagarjuna's tetralemma. Nagarjuna was the second century Indian philosopher who immensely influenced subsequent

Buddhist thought with his philosophy of emptiness, one component of which was his tetralemma or mode of interrogating reality so as to see all opposed terms (A versus B for example) as A, B, both A and B, and neither A nor B.[57] To say that Miyazawa's thought was Buddhist in Nagarjuna's sense the sense is to miss the point however. Saying it is, it is not, it both is and is not, and it neither is nor is not is more than a linguistic game as well.

It would seem that logic denying the dominant modern epistemology of the West, which obeys the law of the excluded middle (where A is A and B is B and it is impossible to be both A and B), has a long, albeit marginal history in non-Buddhist contexts as well. Thomas More's classic early modern work, *Utopia*, for example, displays tendencies to neutralize oppositions within the space of literature rather than resolve them once and for all. This is Louis Marin on the position of More's imaginary island:

> We know that the blessed isle is located between Ceylon and America, but that it stands outside the toponymic circuit and outside the trajectory that runs from world to antiworld. It will thus combine—beyond all space—circumference and diameter, time and space, history and geography, in a place that will be neither a moment of history or a sector of the map, a place that will be sheer discontinuity—a neuter—where alone the island can become manifest…. Homologous with Portugal and England, belonging to

[57] See C.W. Huntington and Gheshé Namgyal Wangchen, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), 38.

> the same hemisphere as Ceylon and America, but distinct from all of these, [the island is] neither antiworld, nor New World, but simply World Other.[58]

In other words, the island of Utopia like Miyazawa's "other spaces" of the Milky Way and Īhatovu cannot exist, from the perspective of a normal logic that cannot abide what Marin calls the neutralization of conventional oppositions. Miyazawa's work is a product and expression of a globalized modern situation at least as much as it is Buddhist or Japanese. Nagarjuna, More, and Miyazawa might have had an affinity on some level. But I believe it is important to look beyond that affinity and analyze the relationships between these figures and the historical contexts in which they operated. Modernity is an extremely heterogeneous milieu. Despite seeming both strange and quite delightful, there is nothing non-modern or incongruous about Miyazawa's "other spaces" (the same can be said about Moore's vision of utopia and Nagarjunian thought when deployed in modern contexts). In other words, I believe, the exception in modernity is the norm.[59]

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[58] Quoted in Fredric Jameson, "Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse," in *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1988* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 87.

[59] My argument here agrees with Harootunian's discussion of modernism in his preface to *Overcome by Modernity*, where he argues that "the past, especially the precapitalist past, offered a

Another instance of what I am calling Miyazawa's logic of neutralization is the name of the cooperative organization that he founded, the Rasu Chijin Kyōkai. The fact that Miyazawa once said that "*rasu*" has no meaning has not deterred scholars from conjecturing about what the word might mean. Satō Takafusa believes, for example that "*rasu*" is a Japanese pronunciation of the English word "lath," which means a strip of wood or metal that is nailed in rows as a sub-structural support for plaster shingles or tiles. The logic here is that Miyazawa meant his organization to be a support for farmers.[60] Onda Itsuo argues that "rasu" is a reference to John Ruskin. This makes sense because the Japanese phonetic transliteration of "Ruskin" in katakana is "*rasukin*" (ラスキン). Miyazawa also approvingly cites William Morris in "Nōmin geijutsu

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storehouse of tropes for modernist rearticulation …" (xxi). However, I would underline the fact that Miyazawa and other artists, including Tanizaki Jun'ichirō for example, went beyond a paradoxical "modernism against modernity" (ibid.). More multidimensional paradoxes come into play regarding this question, because, if as Harootunian later suggests, Japanese modernism's opposition to modernity has always been part and parcel with the actual nature of modernity, then in significant ways being either for or against modernity actually has no meaning at all (cf., xxii-xxiii). Regarding such questions, see also Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 235-338 and 373-374, where the authors describe capitalism (and implicitly, modernity) as a system that thrives on its own contradictions in the form of "antiproduction."

[60] If this theory is correct to whatever extent then there is an interesting parallel between the meaning of Miyazawa's peasant support (lath) cooperative organization and the Kokuchūkai, the meaning of which is "pillar of the nation society."

gairon kōyō" and Ruskin and Morris were the primary proponents of the arts and crafts movement in Victorian England. The arts and crafts movement was designed to break down the distinctions between work or everyday life (craft) and art, something with which Miyazawa was in definite sympathy. Onda also notes that Rasu sounds like an inversion of the two syllables of *shura* ("rashu") as in "haru to shura" (spring and asura). Matsu'ura Hajime argues that "*rasu*" is from the English word "rustic." Another theory is that "rasu" (羅須) is an allusion to the "ra" in "*mandara*" (Eng./Skt., mandala) and the "shu" in "*shumidan*" (須弥檀), a word referring to a miniature representation of Mt. Sumeru. Sumeru is a mountain featured at the center of Buddhist symbolic cosmological schemes. This theory makes particular sense because in "Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō" Miyazawa mentions Sumeru as a place embodying the creativity of religion in heaven and earth.

I think it would be mistaken to reduce the meaning of "*rasu*" to any one of the theories mentioned above or to any other theory that exists or is yet to be invented. The charm of Miyazawa's thought was its indeterminate quality. His neutralization of the fixed identities and oppositions of conventional existence invites his readers to creatively engage his texts, without fixating on any given reading of what particular things might mean. In fact, for me, interpreting Miyazawa

is especially difficult because of the manifold possible explanations that are logically available, and the persistence of my desire not to foreclose that field of possibilities.

However, the richness of Miyazawa's corpus is also its weakness, particularly when it came to trying to actualize Chigaku's and Miyazawa's ideal world in the material world instead of in the realm of literature. When epigones of Chigaku such as Ishiwara Kanji acted the consequences were dreadful in a violent sense. This is partially attributable to the fact that Ishihara remained faithful to Chigaku's reading of the role of the Japanese nation-state's mission to bring about an ideal world. However, some common reasons help explain the utter failure of Nichirenism in general and the failings of Miyazawa's activism in particular when it came to actually making the world a better place in any sense.

As an avid amateur photographer Tanaka Chigaku liked using the camera as a metaphor. Near the beginning of the third volume of the *Taikan*, "Shūyō mon" (Essentials of our sect), Chigaku explains that the whole of the *Taikan* is like a camera. The complex and foundational second volume, the "Taikō mon" (General principles) corresponds to the real thing that one wishes to photograph. The last two volumes, the "Shingyō mon" (Faith and practice) and the "Anshin mon" (Heart-mind at ease) are concerned

respectively with the regulation of the self and one's relationship with others. In other words the last two volumes are concerned with immediate, everyday existence. The "Taikō mon" is vast and complex, according to Chigaku, and the "Shingyō mon" and "Anshin mon" are narrower in scope. The first chapter, the "Meigi mon" (Righteousness of our sect) is a view of the *Taikan* as camera from the outside.

The all-important function of the "Shūyō mon," Chigaku argues, is to act like a lens that mediates between the "Taikō mon" in its vast complexity and the two narrowly concerned latter chapters which are like the "focus glass" (*pinto garasu*). The focus glass is where the film in an actual camera receives the image from the lens. The author in theory focuses the lens in a way that is analogical with a lens taking in a vast scene and focusing it within a camera in a compact way that can be registered and recorded on film. In terms of what the "Shūyō mon" actually does, this means that the author makes the complexity of the "Taikō mon" easier to understand through the use of various heuristic devices such as, I would note, the metaphor of the camera itself.[61]

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[61] Saitō, 163-165, based on his reading of the introductory section of the "Shūyō mon," in the *Taikan*, 1933-1959. See in particular p. 1958 for diagram of *Taikan* as camera.

Saitō suggests that Miyazawa's notion of the "mental sketch modified" is based on the idea of the *Taikan* as a camera and the "Shūyō mon" as its lens. Saitō's interpretation is grounded in the fact that Chigaku offers in addition to the camera metaphor another way of understanding the relationship between the parts of the *Taikan*. Chigaku also regarded the total work as a body, with the "Taikō mon" as flesh and bones, the "Shūyō mon" as the spirit (*konpaku*), the "Shingyō mon" as the circulation of blood, and the "Anshingyō" as bodily action in daily life.[62] Because of this, Saitō notes, one can call the "Shūyō mon" lens the "spirit lens" (*konpaku renz*). Saitō sees a similarity between the notion of "spirit" and "mental" on the one hand and the idea of a "lens" and the idea of a "sketch" on the other. Saitō thus argues that "spirit lens" corresponds with Miyazawa's "mental sketch modified," noting that Miyazawa's self-declared condition as an asura modified or focused (or intensified) his poetic works. Saitō thus argues that Miyazawa's based his mental sketching technique in Chigaku's theories. This was particularly the case with regard to Chigaku's theories about structural function of the *Taikan*. Saitō suggests that Miyazawa's work employed heuristic devices in an effort to guide people to the truth.[63]

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[62] Saitō, 163.
[63] Saitō, 164-166.

Whether one agrees with Saitō's reasoning, it is extremely interesting that Chigaku chose the camera as a metaphor for the pedagogy embodied in the *Taikan*. His use of the camera also points out a problematic continuity between himself and Miyazawa. Chigaku claims to use the "lens" of the third volume to focus and register the complex reality of the second volume for us in our narrowly concerned everydayness. By doing so he refers to an a method of teaching people the true nature of reality. This true nature however registers like a photograph. Chigaku wishes to register reality for us in a static or reified way. From a certain perspective this is not problematic because what Chigaku wishes to register is static as well. The eternal original Buddha that is both immanent and transcendent is completely unchanging. According to the theory this Buddha is an unchanging essence manifesting itself in all material forms, which themselves are constantly changing (or locked in a never ending cycle of birth and death). But the eternal original Buddha representing ultimate truth does not change. If it is immanent in all living things, all forms of identity, then despite ephemeral difference reality is one monistic, unchanging identity. Chigaku privileged the ahistorical over history and identity over difference.

Miyazawa believed that he could transform this world into an ideal one because of his faith in the idea that this world always

already an embodied an eternally unchanging, sacred essence. This was why his utopian discourse fell short in his attempt to break down oppositions between work, art and religiosity. This was why he failed to sufficiently connect with the actual people he was attempting to help. To overemphasize the current perfection of the world, as is, risks willed ignorance of historical reality. For Miyazawa it meant missing fact that people like the poor farmers of Iwate prefecture in the late 1920s had to worry about such difficulties as paying their rent and selling their rice on ever-fluctuating markets in order to do so. They also had to pay taxes and meet other expenses if only in order to keep on subsisting. To try to transform reality like one can transform one's consciousness while making a "mental sketch modified" risks escaping into a fantasy realm in a way that gives the continuation of the status quo one's blessing.

Conclusion

Modern epistemology tends to focus on the static, the known, or the knowable. We can see a form of this privileging in Chigaku's metaphor of the photograph. A very realistic photograph can last well beyond any natural lifespan, but it also represents both a freezing of becoming, of reality in flux, and a reduction of an infinity of depth and breath to a relatively tiny piece of space. It also means reducing living breathing things to an inanimate condition. Miyazawa

attempted to rebel against this kind of reduction or objectification. He wanted to show people who were suffering a Milky Way inside them. He wanted to show them a universe of possibility within us all. The problem remained that real people, unlike characters in stories or personas in poems have needs that cannot be addressed in this way. Real people change over time and they do unexpected things. They are also forced to confront unexpected and always fluctuating conditions outside of their control. Despite his glorification of spontaneity appears that Miyazawa understood these problems incompletely. Perhaps we can attribute this to a combination of his relatively privileged upbringing and an imagination that preferred to fixate on what was eternal.

In his fixation on the eternal original Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra* we see that, just as with Chigaku, the liberation that Miyazawa's thought promised remained virtual. Actualizing visions of a world where conventional oppositions no longer hold sway would entail breaking down the oppositions that are constituted by differences in material wealth and power within any real society. Impoverished people like Miyazawa's peasants could not live in the idyllic way he imagined under the social, economic and political conditions that existed in northern Japan during the late 1920s and early 1930s. I would go so far as to say that breaking down the

oppositions between work, art, and religiosity the way that Miyazawa imagined may not be possible under capitalism as it has always existed. One would be foolish to hold one's breath waiting for any dramatic change at this juncture in history. However, one can probably think of better things to do than worship the divinity of Miyazawa Kenji.

On the other hand, truly honoring Miyazawa's memory might involve pushing his brilliant imagination further. Perhaps one can embrace what some Marxists might call a dialectic that would not only dream of a better world, but also try to achieve it through an engagement with the social, political, economic, and cultural totality of the present. If Miyazawa had lived longer and been blessed with better health perhaps he would have been able to do precisely that. The subject of the next chapter, Seno'o Girō did go further with his Nichirenism-inspired Buddhism. He did this by using Buddhism to critique the 1920s and 1930s Japanese status quo. In the process he championed the weak and chastised the strong, and this meant even challenging elites who themselves used Buddhism—and in some cases Nichirenism—to bolster their own positions.

Chapter Three: Seno'o Girō and Overcoming Nichirenism

"The salvation of modern people does not lie in a postmortem paradise of serene light (*jakkōdo*). I cannot say enough that it truthfully lies in this actual worldly life."

Seno'o Girō, "The Course of the New Buddhism Movement"

Introduction: the Zenren, October 1933, Kyoto

At the third annual meeting of the National Federation of Japanese Buddhist Youth Groups (Zen Nihon Bukkyō Seinenkai Dōmei, henceforth Zenren) in Kyoto in 1933, Seno'o Girō's Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei (New Buddhism Youth Alliance, henceforth SBSD) put forward seven emergency resolutions. Seno'o had been a charter member of the board of directors of Zenren for the previous three years and he had participated in each meeting. However, Seno'o had come to believe that the umbrella organization had lost its relevance, existing simply as an ineffectual club. He proposed the following as part of the proceedings of the 1933 meeting:

> (1) These [following two points] should be Zenren's guiding principles:
> A- All Buddhist groups should be in solidarity.
> B- In the spirit of Buddhism capitalism should be reformed and a communal society should be realized.
> (2) Rituals should return to the basic principles of early Buddhism.
> (3) Xenophobic nationalism as a form of thought and a movement should be prevented.
> (4) There should be a public statement promoting the reform of capitalism.
> (5) Alcohol consumption should be combated.

> (6) There should be a movement to ban prostitution.
> (7) There should be a protest of Hitler's anti-human and anti-cultural movement.

Of these seven resolutions the group passed numbers two, five, and six, withheld judgment on numbers one, three and four, and completely rejected number seven. Seno'o disenchantment was exacerbated by Zenren's decision to send a letter of thanks to Siam because that nation refrained from condemning Japan's establishment of the puppet-state of Manchukuo at a meeting of the League of Nations.[1] In the estimation of one leader of the SBSD the national Buddhist group received the SBSD resolutions in this way because prevailing opinion in Zenren held that there was no relationship whatsoever between Buddhism and capitalism and that no relationship whatsoever existed between Buddhism and social problems in the real world.[2] In the weeks that followed, Seno'o's group published a special edition of their organ on the incident in Kyoto. Other Buddhist groups that participated in the Kyoto meeting criticized Seno'o's SBSD. Finally, following a chat with the Zenren

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[1] Yoshida Shizukuni, *Nihon shihonshugi no hatten to Bukkyō shisō no yakuwari* [The development of Japanese capitalism and the role of Buddhist thought] (Tokyo: Wakō Shūppan, 1987), 58-9.
[2] Hayashi Reihō, "Zenren no gimansei to seinen Bukkyōto no michi" quoted in Yoshida, 59.

president, Shibata Ichinō, Seno'o decided to secede from the umbrella group.[3]

By 1931, Seno'o Girō began to see a global linkage between imperialist war, fascism/Nazism, and the suffering of great numbers of proletarians (industrial workers and tenant farmers) within Japan. As Stephen S. Large has put it, "it is well to ask why—in a period when most Buddhists followed the dictates of nationalism and the state—did Seno'o insist on relating his private quest for the ideal self in Buddhist religious terms to his public quest for the ideal society in socialist political terms, and what were the consequences?"[4] This is an especially engaging question given the fact that Seno'o led a youth group affiliated with the modern Nichirenshugi (Nichirenism) movement from 1919 to 1931, and was originally attracted to Nichirenshugi by the writings of Tanaka Chigaku in 1915.

The answer, I believe, is religious or spiritual in a sense that surpasses religion and spirituality as commonly understood. Seno'o rejected a world of things defined as commodities, or in other words as goods that can be bought and sold without reference to the history

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[3] Yoshida, Ibid. On the Zenren incident, see also, Inagaki Masami, *Budda o seoite gaitō e: Seno'o Girō to Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), 146-49.
[4] Stephan S, Large, "Buddhism, Socialism, and Protest in Prewar Japan: The Career of Seno'o Girō," *Modern Asian Studies* 21: 1 (1987), 154-55.

of their production. He also rejected the world of things defined as the objects of a science which tends to approach the world as made up of already completed things to be judged only with regard to their future utility. He saw all things as being in a state of change, as being in a constant state of production. This led Seno'o to believe that a world dominated by inherently exploitative capitalism could be otherwise. It also led him to regard nationalism and existing Buddhism as shams or as opiates. Seno'o eventually developed a profound sense of his own historicity, leading him to understand the nation and established religion as reified, ahistorical entities governed by pseudoscientific instrumental rationality par excellence..

Ultimately Seno'o came to thoroughly deny the substantiality or reality of even his own ego or self. He proclaimed that the most fundamental teaching of Buddhism was selflessness. With this belief he entered what Robert Musil called the "other condition," a time-space in which, as David Luft explains, the "ego is actually eliminated, cancelled out in objective relations; the normal sense of the ego and possessiveness dissolves into a true *object*-ivity which is self*less*." Luft further describes Musil's other condition as a state in which an observer has a "sympathetic

relation" with the world that is "not very useful for practical purposes." In short, it is "the condition of love."[5]

In denying the reality of his own existence as a rigid or stable form Seno'o violated a fundamental law of common sense and the fundamental basis of private property, that if nothing else one at least owns oneself and one's labor. This transgression was moreover an actualization of the immanence that Nichirenists typically conceived of in terms of the eternal original Buddha. Unlike Chigaku, however, Seno'o integrated this experience with everyday life in the lived present. He did not defer such experience to a point on an ever-receding horizon. Unlike Ishiwara Kanji, Seno'o did not try to facilitate the once and for all delivery of an other condition.

Seno'o eventually termed his epistemology of an empathy with things that penetrated beyond static surfaces "dialectical materialist Buddhism." This selfless sympathy with a world of things in flux was the fountainhead of a compassion that was the engine of his political transformation during the latter half of the 1920s. The materialism of Seno'o's epistemology led directly to what Brian Massumi calls an "expanded empiricism," something at odds with a naïve empiricism that limits investigation and

[5] David Luft, *Robert Musil and the Crisis of European Culture, 1880-1942* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 191-92.

observation to the surfaces of things in an immediately given, static present.[6] Thus, not only was Seno'o's epistemology bound up with a compassion that led to a political realignment. It also nourished an uncommon acuity when it came to his analysis of alarming current events during the 1930s.

Biographical Sketch of Early Years

Seno'o was born in 1889 in Tōjō village, Hiroshima Prefecture to a family in the sake brewing business. Seno'o entered Ichikō, the prestigious First Higher School in Tokyo. However, in September, 1909, following two years of study at the preparatory school, Seno'o fell ill. Doctors diagnosed him with either anemia of the brain or a bronchial catarrh. His digestive organs were having problems with his as well. While his illness worsened everyday, his family's business in Tōjō also began to fail. In the beginning of December doctors ordered him to leave school in order to rest. He returned to his hometown to be nursed by his mother and sister-in-law. His health did not immediately improve and he entered the prefectural hospital in Okayama City in January. He left the hospital after three months of treatment with a stomach pump. Seno'o then

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[6] On the idea of an expanded empiricism, see Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 235-36.

briefly returned to Ichikō but he quickly caught pneumonia from a friend and had to return to Tōjō.[7]

In September of 1910 Seno'o returned to Ichikō once again, but within ten days he experienced a severe stomachache and lack of appetite. Doctors said he had pneumonia again and he was forced to return home.[8] Conditions in Tōjō were depressing due to economic duress, but Seno'o soon found solace in religion. In February, 1911 Seno'o met an elderly, wifeless tofu merchant named Matsuzaki Kyūtarō, a devout believer in the Nichirenshū sect's teachings. Seno'o's family was traditionally affiliated with the True Pure Land sect, but following his chance encounter with Matsuzaki, Seno'o converted to Nichiren Buddhism.[9] The death of Seno'o's sixteen-year-old sister in June strengthened Seno'o's devotion to his newly found religion.[10]

For a few months Seno'o visited a local Nichiren temple daily and participated in ritual readings of the *Lotus Sūtra* aloud. Becoming close to the head priest, he was also able to borrow and read Nichiren's works and writings in the Tendai tradition. He also spent time wandering around the mountainous countryside. One day he overexerted himself while removing a heavy cart from the middle

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[7] Inagaki, 40-41.
[8] Ibid., 41-42.
[9] Ibid., 43.
[10] Ibid., 44.

of a mountain road. He soon caught pneumonia again. In September 1911 he decided to formally withdraw from Ichikō. After once again recovering physically Seno'o found a substitute teaching job at his local alma mater, the Tōjō Jinjō Kōtō Shōgakkō (Tōjō First Normal Higher Elementary School). He began in November.[11]

During two years of work as a substitute teacher at the school, Seno'o was not very happy. When he was a student at Ichikō he had run an informal school for local children during his vacations back home. He taught such subjects as English and composition. He loved it and so did the students. However, Seno'o's stint at the elementary school left him feeling empty and disillusioned, mostly with what he called the "mechanical" quality of the other teachers. He continued to be attached to the *Lotus Sūtra*, but during this period he developed an interest in Christianity when a fellow teacher gave him a pocketbook version of the Bible.[12]

After two years Seno'o left the elementary school in September of 1913. On a whim and because tuition would be free, Seno'o took the application test for the East Asian Common Writings Academy (Tō-A Dōbunshoin). The foreign ministry formed the academy to promote good relations between Japan and China. He and three others passed the test but they were unable to study at the

[11] Ibid., 44.
[12] Ibid., 45-46.

academy's institute in Shanghai because its buildings were burned down in the 1911 Chinese Revolution. They ended up in Nagasaki for training in Chinese language. Before going to Nagasaki Seno'o had ear surgery and this lead to headaches and inner-ear pain. The fact that he and his fellow students were temporarily and inadequately housed on the grounds of a Nichiren temple did not help his health. However, the chants of the Nichiren *daimoku* (*namu Myōhō rengekyō*/hail to the *Lotus Sūtra of the wonderful law*) reminded Seno'o of Matsuzaki. Matsuzaki used to chant the *daimoku* as he made tofu. Soon Seno'o was visiting the head priest at the Nagasaki temple, asking him questions about Buddhism.[13]

According to Inagaki Masami, this was the point at which Seno'o "passed beyond a commonsensical interpretation of Buddhism, and he had an opportunity to deepen his understanding of Buddhist literature." The head priest of the Nagasaki temple educated Seno'o about such concepts as the innate Buddha-nature of everyone or everything, the Nichiren and Tendai Buddhist concept that everything is contained within one thing and even heaven contains hell and vice-versa (*ichinen-sanzen*), the four noble truths, the twelve stages of dependent origination, and the doctrine of the six

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[13] Ibid., 47.

paramitas (perfections).[14] In other words Seno'o learned the basics of both Buddhist philosophy and about the specifics of Nichiren-Tendai Buddhism.

Despite enjoying his knowledge of Buddhism increasing, Seno'o's illness worsened. He decided to quit the academy, staying behind in late fall when his compatriots left for newly rebuilt facilities in Shanghai. When Seno'o next returned to the family home, the family suffered financial disaster because the sake they had in stock spoiled. His elder brother headed the family and its business because Seno'o's father had died when Seno'o was a young boy. His elder brother had always been the strength of the family, but at this point, even he fell ill. During this family crisis Seno'o recovered from illness yet again while devoting himself to the *Lotus Sūtra* and understanding Buddhist literature more generally.[15]

Even as his physical health improved his emotional anguish remained and Seno'o began to think about going abroad as a way to relieve the pressure on his elder brother and family. In the Spring of 1914 Seno'o went to Taiwan. With the recommendation of an acquaintance he soon found work in the patent office of Chilung, a city in northern Taiwan. He lived in a dormitory for government employees and began to save a little money. Before too long,

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[14] Ibid., 47-48.
[15] Ibid., 48.

however, he was ill again with chest problems and ear sickness. Doctors in Taipei ordered Seno'o to return home. He reluctantly did so in March 1915. On arrival in Tōjō he was diagnosed with tuberculosis, an inflamed appendix and pleurisy. His family once again endured his long convalescence.[16]

Seno'o slowly recovered and it was during this period that a hot spring resort manager exposed him to Tanaka Chigaku's writing for the first time. However, an equally significant event occurred in September of 1915. Seno'o decided to go on a pilgrimage to the 1000 significant temples (*sen ga ji*) of the Nichirenshū sect. The pilgrimage would end at Mount Minobe, near Mount Fuji. His trip became difficult immediately because, contrary to what he had anticipated, Nichirenshū temples in Okayama Prefecture refused him lodging. In the city of Takahashi a Nichiren believer told him that in the southern Okayama town of Sōja there was a temple called the Shakuson Shūyōin (Reverent Śākyamuni Cultivation Temple), where a kind priest named Shaku Nikken ran an orphanage.[17] Shaku had been the head priest of a famous temple, the Honzan Myōhonji in Okayama's Yamato Mura. Following the sudden increase of orphans in the wake of the Russo-Japanese war, Shaku decided to give up that life. With a Nichirenshū nun with whom he lived as husband and

[16] Ibid., 49.
[17] Ibid., 50-51.

wife, he founded the Shūyōin as an orphanage. The children called the couple "mom" (okaasan) and "dad" (otōsan).[18]

When Shaku saw Seno'o for the first time it was clear to him that Seno'o was not going to be able to continue on his pilgrimage. After staying one night Shaku invited Seno'o to stay longer. These were economically difficult times in general and the temple was home to around thirty orphans. Seno'o wished to repay the priest and his wife for their kindness. Seno'o made use of his experience as a teacher, helping the children with their studies. He told them Aesop's fables and drew cartoons for them. The children seemed to have deeply enjoyed being with him and he enjoyed this work. Seno'o also took part in religious practices with Shaku, absorbing himself in chanting the *daimoku*. Shaku, as an unorthodox priest, somewhat disdainfully discussed the character of temples and priests with Seno'o. His experiences in Sōja led Seno'o to conclude that becoming an independent priest like Shaku was appropriate for himself as well. In December of 1915 Seno'o soon took the tonsure in a ceremony led by Shaku.[19]

Soon after his ordainment Seno'o felt ill again, so he went to the Okayama Prefectural hospital where he was diagnosed with chronic disease of the respiratory and digestive organs. He returned

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[18] Ibid., 51.
[19] Inagaki, *Budda o seoite*, 52.

to the temple however and felt well enough by the first week of 1916 to plan to resume his pilgrimage in the spring. Unfortunately, his mother soon became terminally ill and he returned to Tōjō to nurse her. She died shortly thereafter. During the ensuing two years Seno'o stayed in the Tōjō area where he often visited a local Nichiren temple and participated in daily activities. He formed a club with others he met at the temple called the Nichirenshugi Sangyōkai (Society for Respecting and Revering Nichirenism).[20] This club's aims and its name reflect the fact that since his introduction to Chigaku's thought, Seno'o read other works espousing the teachings of a specifically modern Nichirenism. Seno'o read Nichirenist literature even more intensely during the period when he lived in Tōjō after his mother's death.[21] The period between 1915 and 1918 also corresponds to the better part of what the scholar Tokoro Shigeki has termed the "golden age of Nichirenism" (1912-1918). During this "golden age" Nichirenism as a movement that centered on the figures of Tanaka Chigaku and Honda Nisshō was becoming increasingly popular.[22]

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[20] Ibid., 53.
[21] Ōtani, 269-270, notes the specific dates (1915-1917) on which Seno'o began to read specific works by Chigaku, Anesaki Masaharu, Satō Tetsutarō, Honda Nisshō and others connected to Nichirenism.
[22] See Ibid., 224.

In the summer of 1917 Seno'o's health began to improve and he started to make plans to move to the capital. He was dissatisfied in Tōjō because he felt cutoff from the center of the burgeoning Nichirenism movement. He decided to try forging a relationship with Chigaku's Kokuchūkai before going to the capital.[23] Towards this end he visited the Osaka branch headquarters of the Kokuchūkai, obtaining a letter of recommendation to introduce himself to Chigaku. Arriving in Tokyo in late March, he went to the Kokuchūkai building near Ueno with his letter in hand, hoping for a meeting with Chigaku. Kokuchūkai representatives told him that Chigaku was not available because he was too busy.[24] He returned to the Kokuchūkai building in early April and participated in a large meeting. He also heard Chigaku speak. With letter in hand he again sought an interview with the Kokuchūkai leader, but Kokuchūkai representatives told Seno'o that Chigaku was sick, and that no other official of the group would meet with him. In his hometown Seno'o read the Kokuchūkai organ and other Kokuchūkai literature. He felt close to the group before he arrived in Tokyo. However, the way the group rebuffed him disillusioned him deeply. He concluded that as an "enormous mechanism" the Kokuchūkai had a "bureaucratic character," which

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[23] Inagaki, *Budda o seoite*, 57.
[24] Ibid., 58, Ōtani, 270.

meant that it disregarded those with rural backgrounds such as himself.[25]

Seno'o dejectedly wandered around Ueno wondering what to do next. He soon acquired Honda Nisshō's *Hokkekyō no shinzui* (The essence of the *Lotus Sūtra*, 1917) and he liked what he read. Because of this, ten days after his last visit to the Kokuchūkai, Seno'o attended the weekly Sunday lecture in Asakusa at the Tōitsukaku (Unification Tower), the headquarters of Honda's lay and clerical Nichirenist group, the Tōitsudan (Unification Group).[26] Honda was the head priest of a small Nichiren sect, the Kenpon Hokkeshū, one that had a history going back to medieval times, but he was also the organizer of several organizations that aimed at addressing the contemporary social context. The idea of *tōitsu*, or unification, was one of his key ideas. This was not exactly Chigaku's *sekai tōitsu* or world unification, however. Honda's *tōitsu* primarily meant the unification of all the various Nichiren sects and all the schools of Buddhism. Honda was also interested in the unification Japanese society, meaning chiefly that he was concerned to maintain harmony between capital and labor.

After Honda's lecture that Sunday, Seno'o met with a Tōitsudan representative and he was very frank with his criticisms of

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[25] Ibid., 58.
[26] Ibid., Ōtani, 270.

traditional religion, his disdain for the orthodox priesthood, and his own unorthodox personal character. In the middle of May Seno'o received a letter from Honda stating that the priest felt the same way regarding such matters. The two met on the nineteenth at the Tōitsukaku. Honda advised Seno'o to work for the ideals of Nichirenism as a layman.[27]

By the beginning of March 1919 Seno'o was working full-time for Honda's Tōitsudan. In addition to daily clerical duties Seno'o worked as Honda's proofreader. This was a time when Honda was publishing several major works. Seno'o also participated in lecture meetings at Honda's Tōitsukaku headquarters, assisting in preparations for both regular meetings and special events. Seno'o accompanied Honda wherever he gave speeches. In this period 500 to 800 people came to Honda's Sunday lectures every week. These were mostly working class people seeking solace from troubled times in religion. Following a Nichirenism Youth Meeting sponsored by the priests of Honda's Kenpon Hokkeshū sect in November 1919, Seno'o formed the Greater Japan Nichirenism Youth League (Dainihon Nichirenshugi Seinendan, henceforth DNS).[28] The DNS was originally composed of students in Nichirenism-related clubs at Waseda, Tokyo, Tōyō, Meiji, and Nichirenshū (today's Risshō)

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[27] Ibid. Ōtani, 270.h
[28] Ibid., 70-71.h

universities. Ichikō students and students from the Tokyo Women's Vocational Medical College (Tokyo Joshi Isen Gakkō) also participated.[29]

The beginning of the Greater Japan Nichirenism Youth League Years

Honda Nisshō founded the Tenseikai (Radiant Heaven Association) in 1909 as a club for society's upper echelon. These powerful individuals rallied around certain "men of knowledge" and sought to engineer social harmony. They were capitalized on the popularity of the concept of Nichirenism, which as we have seen was invented by Tanaka Chigaku in the early part of the decade. Their stated purpose involved manifesting the "law" of *Lotus* Buddhism in this world, and both studying and revering the Nichiren's human qualities.[30] The group's membership included priests, academics, politicians, military officers, lawyers, bureaucrats, members of the Public Prosecutor General's staff, doctors, journalists, industrialists, artists, and novelists. The Tenseikai formed the basis for what Ōtani Ei'ichi calls Honda's "Nichirenism network."[31]

Seno'o, without fully realizing it at first, became a tool of the Tenseikai and its Nichirenism network when he founded the DNS. This role for the DNS was consistent with the role of *seinendan* or

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[29] Ibid., 62.
[30] Ōtani, 164, 169-70.
[31] Ibid., 170-71.

youth groups in Japanese society since the 1910s when state and military figures attempted to use them to inculcate a patriotic and martial spirit in the young, discouraging any form of social conflict within the nation.[32] What was different about the DNS was that its sponsors sought to offer "good guidance" (*zendō*) to the nation in the name of Nichirenism.[33]

When Seno'o and other leaders of the DNS published the inaugural issue of their organ, *Wakōdo*, in September 1920 they distributed it to every single region in Japan, as well as to Korea, Taiwan, and Sakhalin. That month Seno'o and three other DNS organizers went on a speaking tour to Miyagi, Iwate, Aomori, Akita, Yamagata, Fukushima, and Mito prefectures. However, the wide distribution of the organ had little to do with their efforts. Instead, the Tenseikai's network promoted the DNS and their organ in an attempt to use the organization to address what the rich and powerful considered social illnesses.[34] These putative illnesses—in the form of radical political activity among workers, farmers and students—were burgeoning in the wake of World War One.[35]

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[32] See, for example, Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 198-200.
[33] Inagaki, *Budda o seoite*, 67.
[34] Inagaki, *Budda o seoite*, 67. Matsune Takashi, *Seno'o Girō to Shin Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei* (Tokyo: Sanpin Shobō, 1975), 37.
[35] Inagaki, *Budda o seoite*, 67.

Seno'o was particularly useful towards these ends as a writer and orator because he seemed to identify the apparently ubiquitous illnesses of a conflict-ridden, fully capitalist society with the personal illnesses that he battled in his own life. Seno'o found personal solace in religion and he argued in 1920 that embracing religion would likewise enable Japan to overcome spiritual and social problems on a national level. In "Wakōdo no sakebi" (The shout of youth), an essay in *Wakōdo*'s first issue, Seno'o describes the contemporary world as being in disarray, complaining that one thing is broken by what next will be broken. He writes of a world in despair, where the scream of one who wishes for peace is supplanted by a demon that has cursed the world, a world where no one seems to be in charge.[36] Despite the resemblance between some of Seno'o's words and Marx's analysis of a world where all certainties are constantly undermined, Seno'o also emphatically proclaimed that the solution to the situation he decried did not lie in Socialism, Communism, or radicalism.[37]

In "Wakōdo no sakebi" Seno'o intertwines his personal difficulties and the anxious personal feelings of others with the both the distress felt by those in Japanese society who had a tendency to

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[36] Seno'o Girō, "Wakōdo no sakebi" in *Seno'o Girō shūkyō ronshū*, ed. Inagaki Masami (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1975), 11.
[37] Ibid.

rebel against an unjust status quo ("radicals"), as well as those for whom rebellion in itself was the cause for distress (the Tenseikai). He argued that religion offered the key to waking up from delusory and troubling everyday life. Seno'o's own experience with faith led him to decry any trend towards what he considered the hollow appeal of secularism. According to Seno'o at the time, "when one separates oneself from religion, it is like a flower with no root because there is no life. Even if it is beautiful it soon shrivels."[38]

Seno'o's sought to inspire youth to break out of what he considered a kind of collective hypnosis, but his words anticipate the violent language of 1930s Nichirenist terrorists who resorted to literal violence in their quest for an escape from the problems Seno'o confronted in 1920:

> [t]he daring undertaking that was the [Meiji] Restoration too depended on the young people who were warriors of the nation. … Just who is it that is going to sweep away the evil cloud that will obstruct the sunlight in the present Taishō age, when there are more and more internal and external manifold hardships? It is the Autumn when everyone must rise together as one, but then again who do you think it is who should be the backbone of this? Who is chosen to be the corps of those who are prepared to die [*kesshitai*]? Is it not the young people of the *Dainihon Nichirenshugi Seinendan*?[39]

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[38] Ibid., 13.
[39] Ibid., 13. Emphasis in the original is in boldface.

Seno'o's ideas for his young constituency most dovetail with the concerns of a Tenseikai that was following in the footsteps of earlier sponsors of *seinendan*. The ideal young person, he argues,

> should be a warrior for the laws of Buddhism [dharma], for the emperor, for the nation, for the world. He should also shine light upon and lend his strength to the prefecture, county, town, village, household, armed forces, schools, hospitals, society and all of the things in heaven and earth.[40]

Seno'o then goes on to implore his compatriots to be model politicians, soldiers, scholars, merchants, doctors, farmers, and craftsmen.[41]

Seno'o also specifically connects his discourse on youth to Nichirenism. After the quote above, Seno'o states that chanting praises to the *Lotus Sūtra* is the necessary accompaniment to serving the nation. He says that "this is the foundation of "true world peace, the health of the nation and social harmony." He then identifies the mission of Japan's youth with that of the Jiyu Bosatsu, (Bodhisattvas of the Earth).[42] These are figures that the Buddha in the *Lotus Sūtra* predicts will rise from out of the earth in a future degraded period (*mappō*) in order to lead all living things to salvation. Nichiren himself personally identified with the leader of these bodhisattvas, and in the modern period, many Nichirenists identified themselves

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[40] Ibid., 13-14.
[41] Ibid., 14.
[42] Ibid., 14.

with them as well. Nichirenists tended to identify modern social problems with the degraded last days of *mappō*, despite the fact that Nichiren thought he was living in that period in the thirteenth-century. Modern Nichirenists would moreover identify their own activities that aimed at bringing about a better world with the activity of the Jiyu Bosatsu. Rising out of the earth signified overcoming the most degraded or difficult situations and because of his chronic illness it is not difficult to imagine that Seno'o himself identified with the bodhisattvas.

The Beginning of the Break

Seno'o led a by life during the early years of the DNS. He worked on *Wakōdo* and traveling around the country lecturing. In Tokyo he constantly visited parishioners of what he called his "temple in motion" (*ugoku otera*), giving advice about religious and other matters. He ran a Sunday school at Honda's Tōitsukaku with nursing school student volunteers and others.[43] In the midst of all of this Seno'o also married Saitō Fumiyo. She had been a teacher at the elementary school in Seno'o's hometown where he had worked, and they had corresponded during the intervening years.[44] He had found and married his lifelong companion and one might assume that these were happy years for him.

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[43] Inagaki, *Budda o seoite*, 63.
[44] Ibid., 63-64

However, Seno'o started to have misgivings about the DNS by at least 1922. In the summer of that year Seno'o and several students who were living in the Wakōdo ryō, a hostel that the DNS operated in Tokyo, spent around a month at a villa at the beach in Kamakura called "Paradise" (*Rakuen*). Seno'o and the others enjoyed themselves, for example, staging a dramatization of Nichiren's life (Inagaki calls it a pageant). The owner of the villa was Ueda Tokishige, the president of a securities company as well as a member of the DNS. When confronted with the opulence of Ueda's lifestyle, here, in a place called Paradise Seno'o got his first inkling that the financial backers of his youth group were motivated by something other than religiosity.[45]

In 1924 landowners and their allies invited Seno'o to mediate in disputes between tenant farmers and landlords in three villages in Yamagata Prefecture. Such disputes began in the early Taishō period (1912-1926), with as many as 1260 incidents in 1924. According to Inagaki, Yamagata was especially affected by the disputes, the prefecture was also a traditional stronghold of the Nichirenshū sect, and there were many youth there who joined the DNS. Despite the fact that the members of the landowning class

[45] Ibid., 66-67.

invited him, Seno'o gradually came to take the side of the tenants in the disputes.[46]

From this time on we see two parallel tendencies in the Seno'o' life and thought. One is concerns his changing conception of Buddhism—a movement away from Nichirenism and towards something new. Secondly, consistent with his propensity to criticize existing capitalism and, increasingly, an embrace of Socialism, Communism, Marxism, and proletarian interests in general he moved towards the political left. Both tendencies began to reach fruition in Seno'o's founding of the Shinkō Bukkyō Dōmei in 1931.

The Change in Seno'o's Buddhism

From 1925 to 1928 Seno'o's thinking shifted and this is reflected in essays he published in *Wakōdo*. Ironically, Seno'o took the first major step towards a new way of conceptualizing Buddhism when he publicly defended the thought of Honda Nisshō. In 1927 Seno'o published a series of articles in six chapters on the *honzon*, which literally means object of worship. They were a polemic directed primarily at the Risshō University scholar, Kiyomizu Ryūzan. In Nichiren Buddhism the word *honzon* in its most basic sense refers to a mandala, a graphic representation of the cosmos.

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[46] Inagaki, *Budda o seoite*, 70-72. For a historical account of the nationwide disputes between tenant farmers and their landlords during the interwar period, see Ann Waswo, "The Origins of Tenant Unrest," in *Japan in Crisis*.

Specifically it refers to a mandala created by Nichiren that has the written phrase *namu Myōhō Rengekyō* (hail to the *Lotus Sūtra of the Wonderful Law*) at its center. The phrase is also called the *daimoku* and Nichiren Buddhists typically chant the phrase as part of their everyday religious activity. The dispute between Seno'o and Honda on the one hand, and Kiyomizu on the other, was over the precise relationship between the *daimoku* and the *honzon*.

Nichiren can be read to have meant that reverencing the *honzon* and chanting the *daimoku* are means to actualize the Buddha within oneself and to transform the world into a pure land or paradise of the Buddha. Nichiren can also be read to have meant that a cosmic and immanent Buddha pervading everything is one and the same with the "historical" Buddha, Śākyamuni who lived as an actual man in India. However Nichiren's thought is ambiguous. Because the *Honbutsu* or original Buddha and Śākyamuni are one and the same, it is possible to emphasize one or the other as most important.[47]

In his interpretation of Nichiren's *Kanjin honzonshō* (treatise on the contemplation of the object of worship), Kiyomizu emphasized the importance of the eternal original Buddha. Kiyomizu recognized the oneness of this Buddha and both this world and its inhabitants. But for him the Buddha as a supernatural, cosmic essence took

[47] Cf., Inagaki, *Budda o seoite*, 72-75.

precedence over Śākyamuni, and the *honzon* correlated with the cosmic, eternal original Buddha (*Honbutsu*). In the pages of *Wakōdo*, Seno'o articulated Honda's argument, stressing the importance of Śākyamuni as a man who lived, became awakened and died in India. According to Seno'o's articulation of Honda's argument, the *honzon* referred to the "three treasures" of the Buddha, the dharma (law or teachings), and the sangha (community of Buddhists). For Honda according to Seno'o, the Buddha of the three treasures was fundamentally the historical Śākyamuni, the dharma referred to the *Lotus Sūtra*, and the sangha referred to the four Bodhisattvas who are the leaders of the Jiyu Bosatsu or the Bodhisattvas of the earth.[48]

The difference between Honda and Kiyomizu had ramifications for Seno'o's political transformation. To claim that everything is always already the eternal, original and always already awakened Buddha gives one's blessing to the status quo, conceptually

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[48] Inagaki, *Budda o seoite*, 74-75. The text of "Honzonron hihan" is included in *Seno'o Girō shūkyō ronshū*, pp. 86-196. There is a very clear exposition of Seno'o's approving position on Honda's view of the *honzon* in Seno'o's own words in *Seno'o Girō nikki* [Seno'o Girō diary], volume 3, ed. Seno'o Tetsutarō and Inagaki Masami (Tokyo: Kokusho Kenkōkai, 1974-75), p. 180 (dated 29 January, 1927). Here Seno'o states that, according to Honda, even though Nichiren stressed the human nature of the object of worship this does not mean that the *honzon* (or Buddha) simply already exists within one's own heart and mind. Rather, for Honda, the emphasis is on the historical Buddha who is the this-worldly embodiment of the truth of such Buddhist teachings as that all things are interrelated and mutually dependent. According to the argument, the Buddha as a living human being is to function as a model for human activity.

transforming the status quo into a manifestation of the Buddha. If one adopts this position one would tend not to engage in political activity that would challenge the way things are. To emphasize the this-worldly character of the Buddha Śākyamuni, however, as well as the concept of Jiyu Bosatsu as a metaphor for those who originate from and act within this world promotes the notion that this-worldly activity is always consistent with the teachings of Buddhism. In other words, Kiyomizu's line of thought risked apotheosizing the immanence of the Buddha. This was to the degree that it shifted into a kind of transcendence due to an implicit inalterability of the world as is. In contrast, promoting the historical Buddha as a model for activity in this world leaves room for the conceptual possibility of human agency.

For Honda, however, this-worldly activity meant more deeply engaging with politics in the actual modern world in order to facilitate harmonious social relations ensuring the maintenance of a status quo under capitalism. For Seno'o, as we shall see, the tendencies inherent in Honda's Buddhism would take on a more radical character. First, however, Seno'o had to engage in a conceptual dialogue with modern Buddhology (modern studies of Buddhism initiated by Western Orientalists). Another part of the

puzzle that was Seno'o Girō has to do with his movement towards the political Left, and that is where we now turn our attention.

The Change in Seno'o's Politics

Between 1925 and 1928, Seno'o also began to see the political, economic and social landscape in new ways. In these years he continued working on behalf of tenant farmers in their struggles with the land-owning class. He also took an interest in factory workers, breaking with Honda's policy of encouraging "labor-capital cooperation." Seno'o had already read Kawakami Hajime's *Tale of the Poor* (Binbō monogatari), and he found it inspiring. Now Seno'o read works such as Hosoi Wakizō's *Factory Girls Tragedy* (Jokō aishi) and Romain Rolland's *Mahatma Gandhi*. He also read the various works of Marx and Engels, along with Lenin's *State and Revolution*, Bukharin's *The World Economy*, Yamakawa Hitoshi's *Remarks on Socialism* (Shakaishugi no hanashi), and Hoinden Yoshio's *Consumer Union Pilgrimage* (Shōhi kumai junrei). As Seno'o completed these works one after the other, Inagaki reports, he wanted to put them into practice. On a practical level he recommended that readers of *Wakōdo* read Yamakawa Hitoshi's book.[49]

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[49] Inagaki, *Budda o seoite*, 78-79.

As evidenced by his diary entries, by 1925Seno'o began to more deeply comprehend the contradictions of his own position. He went to the house of a famous soy sauce brewer in Noda, Chiba Prefecture as a "missionary." When confronted by the grandeur of the brewer's garden Seno'o observed the direct link between that grandeur and the sweat of workers. He wrote that the wondrous garden was the workers' involuntary present to the capitalist class. In that same year Seno'o heard about the abhorrent suffering of farmers in Shizuoka Prefecture, and responded that societal structures must immediately improve, that the rich are squeezing blood from the working class, and that he was beginning to feel revolutionary sentiments.[50] Seno'o started to be more forthcoming with his opinions by 1928. In that year he was asked to give a lecture as a "missionary" at a textile factory in Kurashiki, Okayama Prefecture. Confronted with the pale faces of the exhausted women working the night shift in the factory, he ended his talk by stating that reform of the capitalist system was absolutely necessary.[51]

During the years in question, Seno'o began to more fully comprehend the reasons for "radicalism" in opposition to capitalist exploitation. When he went to Okayama Prefecture to engage in missionary work in 1926, he saw unrest in the region and he noticed

[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 79.

that security was exceedingly tight in anticipation of an imperial family member's passage through the area. Authorities perceived a frightening tendency towards radicalism and socialism in the area. Seno'o's believed that the problem in Okayama was that people there had not fully reflected upon their attitude towards Burakumin (outcastes) and Koreans. In other words, Seno'o appreciated material factors precipitating dissatisfaction with the status quo.[52]

In the late 1920s Seno'o did not limit his concerns to the plight of farmers and factory workers. For example, in the summer of 1928, Seno'o traveled to his hometown in Hiroshima Prefecture where he joined a local residents' campaign to protest the construction of a dam in the Taishaku canyon scenic region. Existing laws for the conservation of nature protected the canyon, but a hydraulic power company engaged in corrupt practices so as to secure the right to build the dam anyway. They conspired with local officials and used yakuza to intimidate people.[53] Seno'o also became very concerned with the situation of prostitutes in legal brothels and he called for the emancipation of women and girls who were virtually slaves. In a 1928 issue of *Wakōdo* Seno'o published the words of an

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[52] Ibid., 79.
[53] Ibid., 80. Inagaki notes that because the Seno'o family had gone bankrupt as sake brewers and gone into the hotel business, Seno'o had a personal interest in maintaining the natural beauty of Hiroshima Prefecture.

elementary school teacher from northeastern Japan who stated that some of the prostitutes working in Tokyo's major red light district (Yoshiwara) were his former students. In the same issue, Seno'o himself wrote of the incessant abuse of the women and girls who had been sold into the profession.[54]

Importantly, during the late 1920s Seno'o did not simply write about Japan's social problems. With the exception of Hokaidō and Kyūshū he traveled all over the country as a "man of religion" (*shūkyōsha*). Inagaki notes that this is especially remarkable considering the slow speed of modes of transportation at the time. In each of the regions he visited Seno'o went to high schools, junior high schools, normal schools, women's' schools, farming villages, and factories. He gave lectures and personally interacted with people. He also engaged in roundtable discussions with students and youth. His lectures concerned the *Lotus Sūtra*, but he also addressed current events from the perspective of his changing political consciousness.[55]

The End of the Dainihon Nichirenshugi Seinendan

Seno'o's movement away from Nichirenism orthodoxy reached a peak in 1930 with the February issue of *Wakōdo*. On the opening page Seno'o criticized the extravagant cost of the wedding of the Shōwa emperor's brother. He expressed indignation that the

[54] Ibid., 80-1.
[55] Ibid., 81-82.

imperial house spent so much on a wedding when so many people had so little. In the same issue Seno'o called billionaires (*kinmanzoku*) and capitalists "hungry ghosts" in an article titled "True Love is Like This" (Shin'ai wa kaku no gotoku). Hungry ghosts in Buddhist cosmology have huge bellies and tiny mouths, and they can never be satisfied. In other words they are pathologically selfish and materialistic. Seno'o moreover stated that leading Nichirenists performed as mouthpieces for these hungry ghosts. Lastly, he denounced as an opiate the tendency of these Nichirenists to purvey an abstract religiosity catering to the interests of the bourgeoisie at the expense of the proletariat.[56]

Seno'o published entries from his diary in *Wakōdo*'s February 1930 issue. In the entry dated 5 December 1929, Seno'o criticized the March and February mass arrests of Communists in May 1928. Seno'o argued that such measures failed to address the actual problems of Japanese society.[57] After an invitation to the Kabubiza (Tokyo's famous Kabuki theatre in the expensive Ginza district), Seno'o wrote in an entry dated 10 December 1929 that it was a crime to enjoy the luxury of such a place with so many who could not even

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[56] Ibid., 84-5.
[57] Ibid. On the opening page of the October, 1928 issue of *Wakōdo* Seno'o had already argued that the root of what the establishment considered "dangerous thought" was the tyranny of the ruling class (cited in Matsune, 41).

afford the price of admission to a cheap movie theatre in the working class amusement area of Asakusa. He charged that since there were those who can afford no amusement, the Kabukiza should be demolished.[58]

Seno'o's writings in the February issue led to the fatal blow for Seno'o's tenure as editor of *Wakōdo* and the death knell for the DNS itself. The executive staff of *Wakōdo* included Ueda Tokishige and Tokitomo Senjirō, two wealthy individuals. They had been important financiers of the DNS throughout its history. Ueda was especially infuriated because he was the one who had invited Seno'o to the Kabukiza. Ueda and Tokitomo attempted to wrest editorial control from Seno'o after the February issue and Seno'o resigned in March 1930. Later, because of the popularity of Seno'o's writings, Ueda and Tokitomo reconsidered and reconciled with Seno'o, rehiring him in May. Feeling their positions within the DNS weakened thereafter, Ueda and Tokitomo left the organization themselves in December. By this time however, Seno'o had realized the limitations of Nichirenism. It was time for something new.

Shinkō Bukkyō and Seno'o Girō's Renovation

At the January annual meeting of the DNS, Seno'o and the twenty-five assembled leaders of the group agreed to a motion to

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[58] Inagaki, 84-85.

form the Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei (New Buddhist youth alliance, SBSD) and dissolve the DNS. Not everyone in the DNS went along with the new group however. In particular, the Yamagata Prefecture branch did not participate.[59] On the whole, of the two thousand people in the DNS at the time of its dissolution, five to six hundred went along with the shift to the SBSD. At its peak in 1936, its national membership would rise to 3000.[60] By April Seno'o had replaced *Wakōdo* with *Shinkō Bukkyō no hata no shita* (Under the banner of New Buddhism).

In June the new organ featured an essay titled "Shinkō Bukkyō e no tenshin" (the change to New Buddhism). "Shinkō Bukkyō e" is written as a long dialogue between A and B and it was originally serialized in eight chapters. In the text B asks A why he had changed his allegiances from Nichirenism to New Buddhism. A is a personification of Seno'o and B is his interlocutor. In the following section we will use "Shinkō Bukkyō e" to better understand Seno'o's 1931 self-transformation.

From Nichirenism to New Buddhism

"Shinkō Bukkyō e" starts with Seno'o explaining the three principles of the SBSD: to display the true value of Buddhism while denouncing the degenerate character of established Buddhism; to

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[59] Ibid., 90.
[60] Large, 92.

overcome the division and ugly bickering between different Buddhist sects and effect a unification of Buddhism; and to participate in the movement to transform a capitalism that is in opposition to the spirit of the Buddha, as a means to actualize an ideal society characterized by love and equality.

One of the more striking features of "Shinkō Bukkyō e" is Seno'o reconciliation of the contradiction between Nichirenism and a New Buddhism that he grounds in what he calls "fundamental Buddhism" (*konpon Bukkyō*). His fundamental Buddhism refers to the direct teachings of the Buddha as defined for the most part by modern scholars who study Buddhism (Buddhologists).[61] In "Shinkō Bukkyō e" Seno'o cites Japanese Buddhologists, Takakusu Junjirō and his student Ui Hakujū. Takakusu had first learned his craft studying with the great German Orientalist Max Müller at Oxford. He then studied at several German universities and the College du France, where he developed a relationship with Sylvain Levi, a noted French scholar of Buddhism.[62] "Shinkō Bukkyō e" features a quote from Takakusu on the atheist character of Buddhism, and an excerpt

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[61] See Seno'o Girō, "Shinkō Bukkyō e no tenshin," 270-71, for statement of the veracity of views produced by modern scholarship on Buddhism.
[62] See Jackie Stone, "A Vast and Grave Task," 225.

regarding the insubstantiality of the self from T.W. Rhys Davids, the British Orientalist who studied Pali and Sri Lankan Buddhism.[63]

Various regions of East, Central and Southeast Asia respectively developed Buddhisms that over a very long history incorporated elaborate rituals, fantastic theologies, and what modern academics until very recently pejoratively called superstition. Japan was no exception. The Western and eventually the Japanese academic approaches to Buddhism privileged a "pure" Buddhism, unearthed for the most part by archeologists and philologists. The result of the academic study of Buddhism as a "world religion" in modern times was often a version of the religion that had little to do with what people in Buddhist communities had practiced for much of history.[64]

The new primitive or fundamental Buddhism of Orientalist scholars tended to privilege what secular Westerners deemed rational. The rationality of this modern Buddhism often centered on

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[63] For an excellent study of Rys Davids, see Charles Halleisey, "Roads Taken and Not Taken in the Study of Theravada Buddhism" in *The Curators of the Buddha*.

[64] See, for example, Richard King's *Orientalism and Religion*, where he notes the "nostalgia for origins" that drove nineteenth-century scholars to "offer a prescriptive account of Buddhism and to associate 'authentic' Buddhism (whatever that might be) with the teachings of the founder" (p. 148). King also notes the way that non-Westerners from countries with a Buddhist tradition have played an important part in the redefinition of Buddhism. Cf., Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious" in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 278-79.

antinomian and anti-Christian notions in vogue in the nineteenth and early-twentieth-century West. One such notion hinged on the insubstantiality of all phenomena, such as the self or God. The point here is not that someone we call the Buddha did not teach such things. Nor is it the case that such basically atheist or agnostic teachings as the "eight-fold noble path," and the "four noble truths" have not had places in the traditions of various Buddhisms. It is rather that the history of something we call Buddhism is much more complex (and rich) than any philosophy commonly attributed to the historical Buddha.

An example of Seno'o's appropriation of Buddhology is his definition of the Buddhism's "true nature." Seno'o explains in the text that Buddhism "repudiates 'self' and 'attachment' or in other words the individual self and private ownership." Buddhism teaches, he argues, "'selflessness' [or non-self] and non-private ownership."[65] The doctrine of selflessness was one of the defining characteristics of many versions of Buddhism academically defined. Other examples of Seno'o's indebtedness to Buddhology include his argument that Buddhism entails believing that God or gods do not exist.[66] Despite commonly held ideas in the West about Japanese Buddhism (Zen in

[65] Seno'o Girō, "Shinkō Bukkyō e." 262.
[66] See for example, Ibid., 272.

particular), these ideas contradict the common sense of lay or clerical Japanese Buddhist communities throughout pre-modern history.

Later, Seno'o explains what he calls the "Māhayana non-Buddha theory" (*Dajō hi-Butsu setsu*), which too was indebted to modern Buddhology. This is the theory that "the Māhayana Buddhist scriptures are not a record of the direct teachings of the Buddha." Seno'o argues that this indicates the historical reality of a "developing Buddhism" (*hattatsu Bukkyō*).[67] As Seno'o explains, respective communities of believers have regarded all of the Buddhist scriptures, both Māhayana and Theravada, as the Buddha's direct teachings. However, "Buddhism and times both change and they develop as civilization progresses. The Māhayana scriptures were created by a number of latter day disciples in each historical period…."[68] This seems almost impossible to reconcile with Nichirenism because Nichiren argued for the absolute primacy of the *Lotus Sūtra*. He believed that all Buddhist teachings are subsumed within the *Lotus* and ultimately suggested that the chanted praise of the sutra's title (the *daimoku*) somehow contains all of those teachings.

Seno'o managed to reconcile his own Nichirenist past with a future he wished to construct by using Nichiren to overcome

[67] Ibid., 266.
[68] Ibid., 265-66.

Nichiren. For Nichiren, the *Lotus Sūtra* had never been the object of absolute devotion before his time because it had never previously been appropriate to venerate the sutra in such a way. Nichiren claimed in fact that much of his own significance derived from his ability to discern what was appropriate for his own age. For Nichiren, in other words, exclusive devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra* was most appropriate in the degraded period of *Mappō*. Seno'o argued that one should acknowledge that everything in the universe had changed since Nichiren's time, just as Nichiren had recognized the temporal distance between himself and both Śākyamuni and everyone else who had lived and died. Seno'o therefore argued that it was completely consistent with the spirit of Nichiren to leave Nichiren and Nichirenism behind in order to construct a New Buddhism that was appropriate for modernity.[69]

For Seno'o the Buddhism appropriate for the time and place in which he lived needed to engage with "actual society" (*jitsu shakai*). This engagement led to his attempt to synthesize his New Buddhism with Socialism. As he writes in one section of "Shinkō Bukkyō e":

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[69] Ibid., 267-68. Cf., a diary entry from late June 1929, in which Seno'o more simply proclaims that in the interest of the "true path" (*makoto no michi*), renewing Nichiren's corpus is being Nichiren's true disciple and it is not being disloyal to him at all. Quoted in Matsune, 42-43.

> Because everybody in Buddhism up until now has had a "gracious" abstract and conservative faith, they have been blind to the problems of actual society. Because of this they have not taken Socialism seriously. On the other hand, they have [in many cases] allowed themselves to be carried away by reactionary movements. That they then begin to consider Socialism a sin without further thought is without a doubt the [most] extreme mistake of our contemporary world.[70]

Seno'o next states that:

> On the contrary, Buddhism is itself fundamentally Socialist. I as well awoke from the opium-induced sleep, and I feel the power of actual society working through me, making me feel joy from the bottom of my heart.[71]

As we can see, "Shinkō Bukkyō e" evidences Seno'o's anti-capitalism and his increasing sympathy with Socialism. Because of Seno'o's embrace of "fundamental" Buddhism this combination of Buddhism and Socialism was intellectually possible. However problematically related to Orientalism, this fundamental Buddhism allowed Seno'o to strip away belief in substantial entities such as the self, God, or Buddhas which could be considered beings external to oneself that could act on one's behalf, and control or influence human destiny. According to a phrase Seno'o quotes from a serialized newspaper article by Takakusu: Buddhas that people worship as if they are divinities such as "Amida Buddha and Dainichi Nyorai

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[70] Ibid., 280.
[71] Ibid., 280.

express the ideal that is Śākyamuni [the historical] Buddha. Because [these figures] are to the fullest extent human creations, these Buddhas are nothing like Creator Gods, Superintendent Gods, or Judgmental Gods."[72]

Seno goes so far as to repudiate all forms of thought that focus attention away from the material. For example, at one point in "Shinkō Bukkyō e," Seno'o argues that "Platonic love is not satisfying as true love" and true love involves the fusion of "spirit and flesh."[73] Later, Seno'o responds to his interlocutor's suggestion that religion's function is to facilitate a spiritual cultivation that is separate from material concerns by stating "that is the trump card of kept religion" (*goyō shūkyō*).[74]

Denial of the spiritual and the substantiality of the self also enabled Seno'o to attack both the idea that the current circumstances of the poor are the result of the sins of past lives, and the bourgeois ideology of individualism. In criticizing Buddhist clergy in general Seno'o contested an argument that Buddhist priests commonly invoke as an apology for social inadequacies resulting in the poverty of the proletarian class. According to this argument, they are poor because of karma accumulated during past lives. The standard logic

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[72] Ibid., 284.
[73] Ibid., 285.
[74] Ibid., 288. "Kept religion" (*goyō shūkyō*) has the derogatory connotation of religion that serves those who hold power in society.

continues: "One reaps what one sows [*jigō jitoku*], and if it is not the fault of capitalists, society is also not responsible. Therefore all of you should work even harder without cursing either capitalists or society."[75]

Seno'o objected that poverty is the collective responsibility of society as a whole and that therefore the collective responsibility of society must reform defects in the capitalist economic system. His interlocutor asks, however, "what are we supposed to think then if there is no [law of] reaping what one sows, or no karma … and so on? Is there absolutely no such thing as individual responsibility? Seno'o's response is that "[i]t is not that there is absolutely no such thing as individual responsibility. The problem is that we limit responsibility to just the private lives of individuals…"[76] In his understanding of the roots of social inequality, Seno'o thoroughly denies the basis for commonsensical understandings of reincarnation and karma. He demands a reevaluation of what he calls "Buddhism's fundamental doctrine," that of selflessness (*mugashugi*). "The reason for this is because if one espouses 'one reaps what one sows' then the fundamental tenet(s) of Buddhism collapse, and if one espouses 'selflessness' then 'one reaps what one sows' is not valid." Seno'o cites here the opinion of T.W. Rys Davids in order to make the point

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[75] Ibid., 291.
[76] Ibid., 91-92.

that notions of purely individual karma are not authentically Buddhist. A proper understanding of karma, according to Seno'o, is to understand that the "one" of "one reaps what one sows" is society as a collective entity (*shakai-teki jiga* or *daijiga*). He argues that the reasons for poverty can only be understood through social explanations. He continues moreover, because the proletarian class does not manage society they are not the ones to blame for their own poverty. Instead it is the exploitative capitalist class that is primarily to blame. Seno'o rhetorically asks if it is not the case that Buddhist priests have inverted things when they deploy the doctrine of karma. He wonders if this blames the victims of a defective social structure that is concomitant with capitalism.[77]

The Manchurian Incident and the Seno'o Girō's Further Radicalization

"Shinkō Bukkyō e" demonstrates how much Seno'o had changed since he wrote "Wakōdo no sakebi" in 1920. His reaction to the Manchurian incident displays an even further radicalization. The Manchurian incident occurred in September 1931, only about three months after he published the last part of "Shinkō Bukkyō e."

Japanese armed forces had maintained the so-called Kwantung Army, in Manchuria since the Russo-Japanese war. This was nominally to protect the economically and strategically important

[77] Ibid., 292.

Liaodong Peninsula and South Manchurian Railway. The Russians ceded both to Japanese control in 1905. By 1931 however, Japanese interests in Manchuria were beginning to extend beyond Liaodong and the railway zone. Japanese industry saw ever greater potential for the profitable development of and investment in mineral-rich and agriculturally productive Manchuria, while the military saw the strategic value of controlling a huge mass of land on the Asian continent. Both industry and the military desired to maintain a buffer between themselves and Soviet Communism. Many Japanese leaders believed something had to be done about what they perceived as the Manchurian problem.

On the night of 18 September 1931 field grade officers with at least the tacit approval of their commanders acted decisively, causing what we now call the "Manchurian Incident." Led by Lieutenant-Colonel Ishiwara Kanji, they blew up a short section of the South Manchurian Railway on the northern outskirts of the city of Mukden. They blamed the explosion on the Chinese military. The Kwantung Army subsequently used this pretext to attack Chinese forces in Manchuria. By the beginning of 1932 Japanese forces had conquered most of Manchuria. In March of that year the Kwantung army established the Nominally independent puppet-state of Manchukuo. They also crowned Puyi, the former "last emperor" of

China, as the new emperor of a Manchukuo that they totally controlled.

Seno'o criticized the Manchurian Incident in the November 1931 issue of SBSD's newly renamed organ, the *Seinen Bukkyō* (new Buddhism). He wrote the following sardonic comments in a *Kyūdō nikki* column that was subsequently censored:

> 18 September. Special editions came out. At long last, both the Japanese and Chinese armies opened fire in Manchuria. Starting with the occupation of Mukden, the victories of our army in every region were bombastically reported. Because the direct motive for opening hostilities arose from the Chinese army's destruction of [a part of our] railway, it was argued from the perspective of justice on a grand scale that our military activities were in proper self-defense.[78]

Seno'o next rhetorically asked if justice is exists for one's own side only. He then suggested that the Manchurian Incident concerned only Japan's struggle for existence and nothing more. Seno'o also commented that the idea that Japan needed to protect China from a Russian advance south was fraudulent in that Japanese actions were meant to serve Japanese interests.[79]

Seno'o went a step further in his critique of the war when he argued that many Japanese did not want the war. Instead, he wrote, "[t]he war is only due to one portion of the ruling class' calculation of

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[78] Quoted in Inagaki *Budda o seoite*, 109.
[79] Quoted in Ibid., 109-10

what was in their best interests." He even went so far as to suggest that the need for access to coal had driven ruling interests to encourage and capitalize on the Manchurian incident. He furthermore asked rhetorically, "[w]ho benefits from war and who is impoverished by it?" Seno'o did not believe that the war would economically benefit the masses. Seno'o also presciently noted that the world seemed to be heading towards a world war, and he warned that "It will not do for us to be swept towards war because of the agitation of one portion of the *zaibatsu* [industrial conglomerate] and military cliques." Seno'o summed up his opinions about the Manchurian Incident, writing that "[w]ar is humanity's greatest misery. Imperialist war is the enemy of the people. Once humanity has overcome nationalistic feelings, we can be aware of the truth of class confrontation and with this obstacle removed we can think about the welfare of all of humanity."[80]

Crystallization of Seno'o's Thought: Dialectical Materialist Buddhism

In an appendix to a 1933 pamphlet, "Shakai henkaku tōjo no shinkō Bukkyō" (New Buddhism in the midst of social change) Seno'o explained what he called the *san kirei* (the threefold refuge). This was Seno'o's version of the "three treasures" (Buddha, dharma or law, and Sangha or the Buddhist community). For Seno'o,

[80] Quoted in Ibid., 110.

jiki'ebutsu (one's reliance on the Buddha) meant, in a way similar to Honda Nisshō's thought, reliance on the ideal of Śākyamuni Buddha as a liberated human being. Seno'o's *jiki'ehō* (one's reliance on the dharma) meant adopting the interrelated philosophical stances of fundamental Buddhism: the concepts of emptiness and karma, selflessness, and dependent origination (the concept that any given phenomenon is caused by other phenomena and nothing in itself has an independent essence). His *jki'esō* (one's reliance on the community of monks) meant the ideal of living in a community without exploitation.[81]

Seno'o particularly identified *jike'ihō* (one's reliance on the dharma) with what he called "dialectical materialist Buddhism." By this he meant a philosophy of the potential for social change. He identified in fundamental Buddhism's concepts simularities to those of Marxism. This was insofar as Marxist dialectical thinking is attuned to an understanding of history as something constantly in flux and in which chains of mutual cause and effect interdependently link everything. In other words Seno'o saw in both fundamental Buddhism and Marxist thought a means for politically, socially, and economically making things otherwise.[82] Yoshida argues that the

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[81] Seno'o Girō, "Shakai henkaku tōjo no shinkō Bukkyō," in *Seno'o Girō shūkyō ronshū*, 387.
[82] Cf., Large, 160-61.

concrete manifestations of Seno'o's dialectical materialist Buddhism lay in a set of principles that Seno'o identified with the SBSD's mission.[83] As Seno'o explained them in the main body of "Shakai henkaku tōjo no shinkō Bukkyō" these principles are:

> (1) Modern science teaches us to deny the reality of supernatural Buddhas and gods. This is the no-god thesis (*mushinron*).
> (2) Modern science repudiates an "other side"-ism that would allow for life after death. This is the no-soul thesis (*mureikonron*).
> (3) Because modern people are not satisfied by illusory happiness they want to be completely happy in this actual life.
> (4) The masses in modernity want economic stability, and they demand a reform of capitalism.
> (5) Awakened humanity sublates nationalism and praises internationalism.
> (6) Progressive Buddhists sweep away sectarian Buddhism and ardently desire unification (of Buddhism).[84]

Seno'o's "dialectic" referred in practice to the steadfast repudiation of any hypothetical entity that could stand outside of this life and this world and its processes. This repudiation led to Seno'o's ability to imagine life with a more adequate economic system and an overcoming of nationalism.

Seno'o's Activities with the Shinkō Bukkyō Seinen Dōmei

Seno'o and other SBSD members were very active politically in the years following the Manchurian incident. In 1932,

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[83] Yoshida, 23-25.
[84] Seno'o Girō, "Shakai henkaku," 330. Cf., Yoshida, 25-29.

Seno'o joined the proletarian Social Masses Party (SMP). In that same year Seno'o and other SBSD members helped campaign for the party in national elections. In 1933 Seno'o joined three anti-fascist organizations: the Han-Nachisu Fassho Funsai Dōmei (Anti-Nazi League to Crush Fascism), the Tokyo Kōtsū Rōdō Kumiai (Tokyo Transport Labor Union), and the Kyokutō Heiwa Tomo no Kai (Far East Friends of Peace Society). He was first arrested in 1934, while in attendance at an SMP anti-fascist labor strike. He was accused of "exhorting" the strike "to greater militancy." In 1935, Takano Minoru, a leader in the Popular Front against Fascism (*jinmin seisen*) movement asked Seno'o to manage, *Rōdō zasshi* (Labor magazine). Seno'o agreed and the magazine became the organ of the Popular Front over the next two years.[85]

By the mid-1930s it was becoming increasingly difficult for Seno'o and his compatriots to continue their anti-fascist activity. In 1935 Seno'o helped finance a trip to America by Katō Kanjū, an SMP leader, in order to foster international solidarity in the fight against fascism. In 1936 Seno'o and the SBSD played an instrumental role in getting Katō elected in national elections. They shouted slogans such as "*fassho hantai*" (oppose fascism) and "*teikokushugi sensō hantai*" (oppose imperialist war). All of this brought police attention to

[85] Large, 163.

Seno'o. The police broke up SBSD meetings as soon as someone mentioned the words "popular front." Seno'o was arrested again in 1936 following the February 1936 Incident, in which young army officers attempted a coup in Tokyo. This time Seno'o was released within a month.[86]

In April of 1936, while maintaining his membership in the SBSD, Seno'o joined Katō Kanjū's Rōnō Musan Kyōgikai (Labor-Farmer Proletarian Conference), and in June ran as a party candidate the Prefectural Assembly elections. Seno'o was defeated, but he had attempted to use the campaign to publicize the popular front. Finally, the police arrested Seno'o on 7 December of the same year. They accused him of violating the Peace Preservation Law by plotting to destroy the imperial institution and capitalism. Seno'o denied breaking any laws. Eventually, in 1937 Seno'o signed a confession, in which he asked for mercy and pledged allegiance to the emperor. Seno'o had been distraught and unhappy for years, at times even considering suicide. By the time the police took Seno'o into custody in 1937 he was thoroughly exhausted. The final straw came when the police showed him a sworn statement by a fellow Leftist who had stated that Seno'o was indeed guilty of the crimes with which he was charged. The police later used Seno'o's ideological apostasy (*tenkō*)

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[86] Large, 163-165.

as "evidence" to round up more than 200 other SBSD members. In the end twenty-seven SBSD leaders received prison sentences. Seno'o was sentenced to five years, but a court later reduced his sentence. He was freed in 1942 because of ill health.[87] After the war Seno'o took part in peace movements and joined the Japan Communist Party in 1949. He died in 1961 at the age of seventy-one.[88]

Conclusion

Although it may not be our place to either forgive or harshly criticize Seno'o for his *tenkō*, Seno'o himself never completely dismissed the idea of individual responsibility. In 1957 he wrote of Kawakami Hajime, a Socialist intellectual who successfully resisted *tenkō* that:

> When I think of his unshakable convictions when he was in prison … I am ashamed of my own *tenkō*. I should have died in that prison … My cowardice and meanness were pitiful … For that … my existence is wretched.[89]

A far more interesting question than Seno'o's guilt or innocence is the issue of why and Seno'o transformed from a Nichirenist who could agree with Tanaka Chigaku and become a lieutenant of Honda Nisshō, to a "dialectical materialist" Buddhist who vociferously

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[87] Large, 166-168.
[88] Inagaki, 226.
[89] Quoted and translated in Large, 171. From *Seno'o Girō Nikki*, 10 September, 1957, 237.

critiqued capitalism, completely denounced imperialism and saw both nationalism and existing religion as opiates for the masses.

A point of contention in postwar debates about Seno'o centers on the question of whether or not Seno'o's dialectical materialism was "Marxist" and whether or not Marxism, Socialism and/or Communism were important components of Seno'o's thought and the motivations for his actions. One set of scholars including Shimane Kiyoshi, Komuro Hiromitsu and Ichikawa Hakugen have held that Marxism was in fact important to Seno'o's development. They have argued that Seno'o synthesized Buddhism and Marxism, with Marx providing a basis for addressing political, social, and economic problems, and Buddhism providing a basis for addressing the totality of life. Other scholars including Mibu Jōjun, Hayashi Reihō (a former associate of Seno'o in the SBSD) and Inagaki Masami have argued that "Seno'o's dialectical materialist Buddhism was genuinely grounded in the foundation of primitive Buddhism and had no relationship to Marxism."[90]

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[90] For this discussion of debates on Seno'o see Yoshida, 13-15. The quote is from p. 14. Notably, for Inagaki, Miyu and Hayashi, the argument that Seno'o was not *really* Marxist functions as an apology for his *tenkō*. He was never a Marxist, they reason, and *tenkō* was a process designed by authorities to discipline Marxists. Therefore Seno'o did not really acquiesce to *tenkō* according to their logic. On this point, see Yoshida, 17-18.

However, not only do we need to be suspicious about the authenticity of primitive Buddhism because of modern scholars' tendency to distill an essential Buddhism using raw materials derived from a remote past in a way that ignores the religiosities of living "Buddhists" over centuries of history. The discourse on primitive or fundamental Buddhism has often if not always also been implicated in the legitimization of imperialism. British Orientalists, for example, claimed that they were rehabilitating "pure" Buddhism as a respectable religion for a population on the Indian subcontinent that they believed had fallen into depravity and superstition in the centuries since the decline of Buddhism in South Asia. Restoring the putatively higher religion of Buddhism to the subcontinent was thus part of the "White man's burden" and the "civilizing mission" of the British Empire.[91]

Japanese Buddhist Studies were far from innocent as well. Jacqueline Stone noted in her "A Vast and Grave Task: Interwar Buddhist Studies as an expression of Japan's Envisioned Global Role" that by the interwar period Japanese Buddhologists saw their role as "a means of defining Japan's relationship with the rest of Asia,

[91] An investigation of the discourse on so-called Greco-Buddhist art makes it clear that European scholars of Buddhism tended to be interested in Buddhist history and culture only insofar as research would result in at least implicit support for the idea of Western superiority. See Abe, "Inside the Wonder House: Buddhist Art and the West" in *The Curators of the Buddha*, 83.

both linking it to the long tradition of the Asian continent and helping to qualify it for the leadership of Asian culture, however such a leadership might be defined."[92] I would argue that Japanese academic Buddhist Studies dovetailed with the rhetoric of Japanese imperialism. In other words, Japanese Buddhology underwrote imperialism by suggesting that Japan was in a privileged position to bring "true" Buddhism back to the rest of Asia. Because of the role of the academic study of Buddhism in defining an implicitly superior Japanese identity it is furthermore no surprise that Takakusu Junjirō could write the jingoistic serialized newspaper articles that were translated into English and published as "The New Japanism and the Buddhist View on Nationality" in 1936.[93]

However, someone as clearly influenced by Marxism as the philosopher Miki Kiyoshi could serve Japanese imperialism and "fascism" by becoming a member of the Shōwa Kenkyūkai, a research association designed to promote domestic harmony and a Japanese dominated "New Order in East Asia."[94] Neither Seno'o's espousal of fundamental Buddhism nor his adherence to Marxist categories of thought account for his thought and actions.

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[92] Stone, "A Vast Grave Task," 222.
[93] Published as a pamphlet in Tokyo by Hokuseido press.
[94] On Miki Kiyoshi's apologetics for Japanese aggression in Asia, see Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 41-2.

In my opinion, Seno'o's ability to overcome Nichirenism developed primarily as consequence of the development of his propensity to perceive the world as palpable and in motion. The Buddhist teaching that everything is always already the eternal original Buddha warms the heart perhaps but, the immanence of the divine in this sense all-too-easily shifts into a debilitating epistemology of transcendence if one does not maintain an extremely material relationship with a perpetually becoming world of lived experience. In modernity, one of the most common traps for immanence as lived experience, and consequently personal and collective creativity, autonomy and agency is the image of the nation as an ahistorical permanence.

Tanaka Chigaku, for example, remained enamoured with an unchanging image of Japan as imminently and immanently the pure land of the Buddha. For him Japan possessed an especially integral relationship with an equally static image of the eternal original Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra*.[95] Other Nichirenists broke the spell Tanaka was under by rushing headlong into a action aimed at transcendence of lived experience and a once and for all solution to this world's inadequacies. As evidenced by his theory of "developmental Buddhism" and the way that he was able to see real

[95] See for example, Ōtani, 102-3.

social causes for societal conflict, Seno'o somehow overcame Nichirenism. In this perhaps he also overcame fascism as a specter permanently haunting modernity. As a later thinker would put it, Seno'o acted as if "there are no such things as universals, there's nothing transcendent, no Unity, subject (or object), Reason; there are only processes, sometimes unifying, subjectifying, rationalizing, but just processes all the same." In short Seno'o realized the immanence of the Buddha as constructivism, not as something given in advance.[96]

[96] Gilles Deleuze in a conversation with Raymond Bellour, "On Philosophy" in *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 45-46.

Chapter Four: Ishiwara Kanji, History as Contrapuntal Harmony, and Modernity as "the Dawn that Never Comes"

"Man must flee this ridiculous web that has been spun around him: so called present reality with the prospect of a future reality that is hardly better."

Andre Breton

"We all fell into these mistakes, friend and foe alike. . . . We were always looking for the GAP, and trying to make it, hoping that we would pour through it in a glorious, exciting rush. . . ."

Hubert Gogh, British officer during World War I

"New roads lie open to me. I
Shall pierce the veil that hides what we desire.
Break through to realms of abstract energy."

Goethe

Introduction: *Toppa* (breakthrough): Ishiwara Kanji and Piercing the Veil

As a resident of the Tokyo region during the years 2001-2003 I noticed many shiny new books on Ishiwara Kanji (1889-1949) in every major bookstore. Even freshly printed copies of Mark Peattie's *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West* (1975), long out of print in English, were readily available in translation. This indicates that Ishiwara's life, thought and deeds represent some as yet unresolved or irresolvable questions for both contemporary Japanese and us.

Ishiwara is most famous for two things: his involvement in the Manchurian Incident and his theory of the Final War. As a colonel stationed with the Kantō Army in Manchuria in 1931, Ishiwara was one of a few masterminds of the plot to solve the "Manchurian Problem" by blowing up a section of the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railway on 18 September of that year. The conspirators blamed the explosion on Chinese terrorists, and used the event as a pretext to take over a massive region of north-eastern China, setting up a Japanese-controlled puppet-state. For Ishiwara, taking over Manchuria was a step on the road towards East Asian and Japanese victory in what he called the Final War. In his imagination it was also a step towards making the world a much better place.

Ishiwara developed his theory of the Final War over much of his adult life, beginning as early as the years he spent studying and teaching military history at the Army Staff College in Tokyo between 1925 and 1928.[1] He combined a teleological understanding of world history that he gleaned from his study of mostly European warfare,

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[1] According to Kobayshi Hideo, Tanaka Chigaku wrote an article in 1921 that functioned as an important early influence on the Final War Theory. In "Kuru–beki sekai no ni dai bunya" [The coming world division into two great spheres], Chigaku wrote of the division of the world into democratic (*minshu-teki*) "America" and a Japan ruled by the emperor (*kunshukoku no Nippon*). Kobayashi, *Shōwa fuashisuto no gunzō*, 88. However, as we shall see the Final War theory was overdetermined by a variety of influences, and attempting to trace its genesis to a single source is probably conceptually inadequate.

with certain prophetic writings of Nichiren. Tanaka Chigaku and the Kokuchūkai deeply influenced Ishiwara's understandings of Nichiren. He developed his world-historical and Nichirenist ideas into a theory centering on the idea that in the not too distant future a war that would truly end all wars would occur, and that in this war Japan had to be victorious in a contest with the United States. One should underscore at the outset that during the late 1930s and early 1940s and into the postwar era, Ishiwara never confused the actual 1941-1945 conflict between the United States and Japan with the Final War he prognosticated. The Final war for him was always an event on the horizon, and in the conflict Japan and the US would represent two final contradictory forces in world history, leading to a dramatic synthesis or sublation that would subsequently usher the world into an era of everlasting peace and perpetual development.

Recent assessments of Ishiwara are not in agreement on many matters, and this is especially true regarding his relationship with Nichirenism. For example, after noting the good works of the Kokuchūkai, including its hospital, disaster relief efforts and attempts at election reform, Keio University literary critic and neo-Rightist Fukuda Kazuyo's *Chi hiraku: Ishiwara Kanji to Shōwa no yume* (groundbreaker: Ishiwara Kanji and the dream of Shōwa, 2001) asserts the following:

> Ishiwara's argument for eternal world peace is at the same time both the natural result of his belief in the *Lotus Sūtra* and his faithful adherence to the teachings of Tanaka Chigaku. Already by 1919 and in the pages of the *Kokuchūkai shinbun* [monthly organ of Chigaku's group], Tanaka Chigaku held the national principles (*kokutai no hongi*) of Japan to be the construction of absolute world peace.

Fukuda ends this passage by arguing that Chigaku and Ishiwara were in the lineage of the Fuju-Fuse sect of Nichiren Buddhists, a group that resisted state power during the Tokugawa Period.[2]

Another recent writer, Irie Tatsuo, argues in his *Nichiren shōnin no tairei to Ishiwara Kanji no shōgai* (the great spirit of Nichiren and the life of Ishiwara Kanji, 1996) that Chigaku and Ishiwara differed fundamentally in their views of Nichiren Buddhism. Irie tells the same story as Fukuda regarding Ishiwara's first exposure to Chigaku, relying largely on the *Kokuchūkai Hyakunenshi* (hundred-year history of the *Kokuchūkai*), published by one of Chigaku's grandsons in 1980. According to this account Ishiwara attended lectures at the Kokuchūkai's Tokyo headquarters in April 1920 where the words of Tanaka Chigaku deeply moved him, and he almost immediately became a member of the organization's Shingyōin (practitioners of faith), a relatively elite group within the Kokuchūkai. Irie contests the veracity of this story by calling into

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[2] Fukuda Kazuyo, *Chi hiraku: Ishiwara Kanji to Shōwa no yume* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjin, 2001), 147.

question the Kokuchūkai's own self-serving account and ambiguous evidence which supposedly attests to Ishiwara's relative lack of attachment to Chigaku's group. Irie thus specifically challenges the view that Ishiwara was a Rightist,[3] implicitly associating the Kokuchūkai with a deplorable politics and for this reason disassociating Ishiwara, whom he apotheosizes, from Chigaku, his followers and fellow-travelers. For Irie, Ishiwara unlike Chigaku, did not believe that the Japanese were a chosen people or people of the Heavenly Task (*tengyō minzoku*). Accordingly Irie argues that Ishiwara had a more direct relationship with the true teachings of Nichiren, teachings Irie identifies with the sixteenth "Juryō" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, and the great compassion that he believes arises when one realizes the truth that the eternal, original Buddha is "master of the universe" (*uchū no nushi*).[4]

Jacqueline Stone provides yet another recent account of Ishiwara's relationship with Tanaka Chigaku and Nichirenism. In an essay written in 2000 she recounts Ishiwara's theory of the double advent of the bodhisattva Jōgyō.[5] In the *Lotus Sūtra* the Buddha

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[3] Irie Tatsuo, *Nichiren shōnin no tairei to Ishiwara Kanji no shōgai* (Tokyo: Kindai Bungeihsa. 1996), 35-37.
[4] Ibid., 40-1.
[5] Jōgyō 上行 (Eminent Conduct) in the *Lotus Sūtra* is the leader of a group of four bodhisattvas, including Jōgyō himself, along with Muhengyō (Boundless Conduct), Jōgyō (Pure Conduct), and

predicts that Jōgyō will appear during the degraded period of *mappō* (the last days of the "law" of Buddhism) as the messenger of the *Lotus*' teachings. According to a theory Ishiwara fully developed by 1940 and professed well into the middle of that decade, Nichiren appeared as the first this-worldly incarnation of Jōgyō at a time in history that was not yet truly *mappō*. Ishiwara suggested that Nichiren appeared within Japan when he did because people at the time incorrectly believed that *mappō* had arrived. Later, according to Ishiwara, Jōgyō would once again manifest as a "wise ruler," and this wise ruler would then supposedly lead Japan in the Final War. In agreement with Peattie's 1975 assessment Stone argues that Ishiwara's "idiosyncratic vision of a 'final war' that would unite all humanity" motivated him to cause the Manchurian Incident, thus initiating the fifteen-years of war in the Pacific and Asia, and leading to Japan's defeat in 1945. Stone contrasts Ishiwara's "violent millenarianism" with postwar "*Lotus* millennialism" which

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Anryūgyō (Steadfast Conduct). In the sutra, the Buddha predicts that these four will arise from the out of the earth during *mappō* in order to preach faith in the sutra's teachings. They are collectively known as the Jiyu 地通 bodhisattvas or the *shi bosatsu* (four bodhisattvas). Especially in Nichiren Buddhism, because Nichiren believed he was an incarnation of Jōgyō, believers tend to subsume each of the four "bodhisattvas of the earth" into the individual figure of Jōgyō, who embodies the characteristics of each of the four. Translation of the four bodhisattvas' names from Niwano Nikkyō, *Buddhism for Today: A Modern Interpretation of the Threefold Lotus Sūtra*, Kōjirō Miyasaka (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 1994), 179-80;

"envisions a time when, by awakening to the universal Buddha nature, people everywhere will live in harmony and with mutual respect."[6] She uses the expression "*Lotus* millenarianism" to refer to such Nichiren-inspired lay Buddhist groups as Sōka Gakkai and Risshō Ankokukai, and their postwar activities.[7]

Fukuda is a notoriously revisionist right-wing thinker in contemporary Japan, while Irie himself participated as a young man and true believer in Ishiwara-inspired organizations designed to promote "racial cooperation" in post-1931 Japanese-controlled Manchuria. It may seem strange to juxtapose these two with Stone, a well-respected US scholar of Japanese Buddhism. However, each of these three writers is correct in their assessment of Ishiwara. After 1920 he remained a direct and true disciple of Chigaku, one who had a humanistic desire for everlasting world peace. He did however think for himself, developing original theories and concepts, and his frequently contradictory or ambiguous public remarks generally expressed ambivalence regarding idea of the Japanese being a "chosen people." Lastly, Ishiwara's actions and words indicate the violent nature of a man whom we should note was willing to sacrifice half of the world's population in and during a Final War. This war was nevertheless justified from Ishiwara's standpoint because, he

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Stone, "Japanese Lotus Millenarianism," 273.
[7] Ibid., 277-9.

argued, it would eventually bring about everlasting peace and the perpetual development of the world towards an increasingly better, and humanly constructed future.

Stone's essay appears in a volume entitled *Millenarianism, Persecution and Violence*, edited by the historian of religions scholar named Catherine Wessinger. Wessinger's introduction defines millenarianism as "extremely ancient" and as a phenomenon that will "persist indefinitely into the future."[8] Moreover, she argues that millenarianism is an expression of human hope for the achievement of permanent well-being, in other words, salvation." Wessinger also argues that millenarianism evidences the perennial human desire to overcome "finitude."[9] Lastly and notably Wessinger's definition of millenarianism includes atheistic movements (where she still sees evidence of belief in a "superhuman agent"), including Marxism in general, Mao during the period of the Great Leap Forward, the Khmer Rouge during their "super great leap forward," and the Nazis.[10]

The way Wessinger defines millenarianism characterizes Immanuel Kant as much as it describes apocalyptic traditional religiosity or the apparent irrationality of such recent figures as David

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[8] Wessinger, "The Interacting of Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution and Violence" in *Millennialism, Persecution and Violence: Historical Cases*, 3, 6.
[9] Ibid., 6.
[10] Ibid., 9.

Koresh or Asahara Shōkō. In other words there are few things that that embody the spirit of a modernity descended in many ways from eighteenth century-Enlightenment tenets as much as a hope for an always yet to be realized permanent well-being, coupled with a desire to overcome all forms of finitude;[11] that such desires were shared by Maoists and Nazis is testament to the degree to which the Enlightenment and modernity are ridden with contradictions. Writing after Kant, Hegel tied the realization of "Freedom" to processes of world-historical development in which he linked the vehicle for the realization of that freedom inextricably to the nation-state as the "subject of History." In the Hegelian scheme each nation or people with an appropriate state attached to it could be both the embodiment of a particularity proper to peculiar geographical and historical conditions. In this theory of history each people also has the potential to manifest a universality and freedom from all finitude that could reveal itself in an "essential *now*" that is simultaneously both immanent within the present and something "Spirit" would only fully actualize at the end of history.[12]

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[11] See for example Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), especially, 55.
[12] See Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sribee (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1991), especially, 456-7.

Ishiwara's attempt to use the Japanese nation-state to facilitate a national and global arrival at a point beyond what he considered an inadequate situation was neither unusual nor aberrant. However, despite never transcending a consciousness of his nationality, Ishiwara imagined and worked towards the dissolution of the nation-state in the form in which it had existed up until that time. He did this in the process of preparing for the Final War. This may or may not be considered "millenarian," but it is without a doubt in harmony with the general character of modern nationalism on the one hand, and an all too typically modern will to overcome national divisions and turn towards a higher universality on the other.

What made Ishiwara modern (and not millenarian) is that he rebelled against the liberal capitalist, global status quo and in this he challenged the nation-state and modernity itself. Ishiwara fell into the all-too-common trap of believing in a myth of progress towards a socially, politically, and economically better and completely new, more adequate reality. On the one hand Ishiwara held these beliefs without questioning constituent elements of the relationship between an imaginary present, structured by his belief in the unchanging fundamental principles of Japan, East Asia, and the West. On the other hand he uncritically longed for an imaginary and utopian future

that as a compensatory and legitimizing force had an inextricable bond with maintaining the present status quo.

What Wessinger and Stone would consider Ishiwara's "millenarianism" ancient, nor will it necessarily be with us forever. Ishiwara's "millenarianism," in other words, was not simply an atavistic holdover from earlier times, nor was it a manifestation of Japanese or Buddhist "tradition," something evidencing the undeveloped and non-Western, non-modern character of the religious or Japanese mind. Premodern millenarianisms were not bearers of a belief in progress towards a new, better future that human agency would bring about. On the contrary, premodern millenarianisms were typically doctrines of decay and distance from exemplary and original times. They were doctrines of the end of the world, *and* a desire for a return to original perfection. In direct contradiction to such conceptualizations of time and history Ishiwara's concept of the Final War spelled the end of an inadequate modern world, but an end that was anything but a return to the way things putatively used to be. Ishiwara's theory of history, in fact, envisioned a post-Final War world in which unheard of *progress* (scientific and otherwise) and not regression towards pristine origins or conditions fully known in

advance would be the rule.[13] In sum, Ishiwara longed for a "breakthrough" (*toppa*), beyond the impasses and aporias of actually existing modernity. We might read this as an attempt to not only rebel against the hegemony of the imperialist West to overcome modernity itself. Ironically however, there is nothing more modern than trying to overcome modernity, just as there is nothing less millenarian in any traditional sense.

The Final War and History as Contrapuntal Harmony

Ishiwara imagined two basic types of world history, one "secular" and one "religious." He developed and combined these perspectives into a single theory by the time he gave his famous lecture, "On the Final War" (Saishū sensō ron) in Kyoto in May 1940.[14] Ishiwara was a military historian and he based his history of human development in general on the history of warfare. In his

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[13] For a relevant discussion of differences between typical premodern, millenarian or apocalyptic conceptualizations of time on the one hand and modern, progressive temporalities of development on the other see Kosselleck, "Modernity and the planes of Historicity" in *Futures Past*, especially, 5-6 and 14.

[14] Ishiwara's originally titled his talk, "Jinrui no zenshi owaran to su" [human prehistory is about to end]. Professor Tanaka Naokichi of Ritsumeikan University edited and published the manuscript as "Sekai saishusen ron" [on the final world war] in Fall, 1940. The text was subsequently republished various times, and in 1943 Ishiwara decided to eliminate *sekai* (world) from the essay's title. This is why we commonly know the famous lecture/essay as "Saishū sensō ron" today. See Mark Peattie, *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 52-3, note 11.

studies of mostly Western military history he discerned a geometrical progression over the centuries of the area of battle during warfare. As early as his student days at the Military Staff College (1915-1918), Ishiwara began to see a transformation in the area of battle. He thought that ancient warfare consisted of the deployment of phalanx formations. With such formations the point of contact between opposing forces was a simple point (*ten*); firearms usage led to musket-bearing soldiers facing each other in one-dimensional lines (*sen*); and further industrialization and improvements in communications, transportation and more sophisticated weaponry fostered the development of a two-dimensional area (*men*) of conflict.[15]

Beginning around the same time that he developed his geometry of warfare Ishiwara also developed a theory of alternating periods of protracted (*jizoku-teki*) and decisive (*kessen-teki*) forms of warfare throughout history. Premodern warfare, for Ishiwara, was generally decisive, while the introduction of firearms and early industrialization led to more protracted wars of exhaustion. Frederick the Great's military and political maneuvering typified protracted warfare according to Ishiwara's theory, while Napoleon generally

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[15] *Saishū sensō ron* in *Ishiwara Kanji senshū*, vol. 3, ed. Ishiwara Rokurō and Tamai Reiichirō (Tokyo: Tamaira-bō, 1986 (1941), 36-7. Cf., Peattie., 29.

fought wars of decisive annihilation. For Ishiwara the era of wars of sudden and decisive action came to a screeching halt with the First World War, which was a war protracted par excellence.[16]

Ishiwara also argued that with the one-dimensional to two dimensional-expansion of the battlefield, and the vicissitudes of protracted and decisive war, the size of units of command diminished in size. Battalion sized units of command characterized premodern war. The introduction of firearms armies led to company size units of command. Following the French Revolution units of command shifted to the even smaller platoon. Ishiwara observed a shift to squad level units with the Great War. Interestingly, this process of diminishment in the size of units of command went hand in hand with the process leading to total war, when all of a given nation-state's resources, human and otherwise, would come to support the military endeavors of smaller and smaller groups of combatants.[17] In other words, according to Ishiwara's logic as total war increased the destructive capacity of given numbers of individual soldiers, the size of units concomitantly became smaller.

The pace of historical change was quickening in Ishiwara's conception. He believed that the European Middle ages saw few innovations in military technology, but that the Renaissance brought

[16] Peattie, 59-60.
[17] See *Saishū sensō ron*, 48.

sweeping changes in armaments, particularly with respect to artillery and firearms, while the French Revolution brought about changes in the structure of societies that led to new forms of warfare and modes of combat. Lastly, Ishiwara discerned that new weapons such as the machine gun and aircraft revolutionized warfare during World War I. He reasoned, moreover, that the (European) Middle Ages had lasted about one thousand years, the period between the Renaissance and the French Revolution about 300 years, and between the French Revolution and the First World War only about 125 years.[18]

Ishiwara read the increasing rapidity of developments in military technology and tactics as progress towards an even more revolutionary and unheard of development, the Final War as an event that would result in world unification and a new and better global situation. With the Final War the field of battle would develop beyond an "area" into a three dimensional "cube." This cube-like battle environment would correlate with the reduction of the unit of command to one or two operators of a given aircraft, and that aircraft would deliver weaponry that would break the global impasse symbolized for Ishiwara (and numerous other observers) by the First World War. The number of combatants would be dramatically reduced, but the whole populations of nation-states would be engaged

[18] Ibid., 46-7.

in making those combatants effective. The civilian population of the enemy of course would then become a legitimate target, with Ishiwara specifically mentioning that young and old, male and female would come to participate in the Final War. He even goes so far as to state that even "mountains, rivers, grass, and trees" would be drawn into the "vortex" of the conflict.[19]

From Ishiwara's perspective the Final War would be positive because the nation-states involved would develop weapons of unprecedented destructive power and the victorious party in the conflict would be the one able to deploy these weapons first. Ishiwara hoped, of course, that it would be Japan that developed and utilized such weapons in a future war with the United States. According to Ishiwara's theory, use of these horrible new weapons would lead to a general end of warfare because the existence of such weapons would lead to a moral détente, in which no nation-state would be willing to engage in any further warfare whatsoever. Ishiwara makes this point with reference to Japanese history, theorizing that the accidental introduction of firearms to Japan at Tanegashima eventually led to the Tokugawa house's unification of

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[19] Ibid., 38.

the archipelago and more than two and a half centuries of peace between the various domains within Japan.[20]

Ishiwara harmonized this vision of secular and military history and extreme total war with a Nichirenist view of history grounded in what he called "prophecy." Ishiwara's concept of prophecy seems like an ironically instrumentalist attempt to overcome instrumental rationality. In the 1940 text of *Saishū sensō ron*, after completing his discussion of military history and history in general, Ishiwara began his discussion of the religious by noting the limitations of reason. He then argued that contemporary Japanese of the time hungered for "insight" (*mitooshi*) that exceeded "scientific judgment." Next Ishiwara cited the example of Hitler (whom he notes was treated at first like a "crazy person"), pointing out that the German leader had appropriated the power of "insight" to seize the reins of power within his country in the context of German downfall in the wake of the First World War. Despite Hitler's magnificent ability to appeal to people on such extra-rational levels, Ishiwara argued that insight grounded in "religion" was much more powerful.[21]

By 1940 Ishiwara's analyses led him to the conclusion that an unprecedented struggle (*zendai mimon no tōsō*) predicted by Nichiren

[20] Ibid., 37-8.
[21] Ibid., 52.

would occur in about fifty years and that this struggle would result in the unification of the world. Ishiwara prefaces this claim with a review of Nichiren Buddhist teachings regarding the triple periodization of history into *shobō*, *zōhō* and *mappō*, and the promise that Nichiren was correctly aware that he was a reincarnation of Jōgyō Bodhisattva (the leader of the four Jiyu Bosatsu, or Bodhisattvas of the Earth). Ishiwara also claimed that just as Tendai Daishi (also known as Ziyi, the founder of Tiantai Buddhism) laid the foundation for Nichiren, Nichiren laid the foundation for Tanaka Chigaku, who systematized and thus completed Nichiren's teachings. For Ishiwara, Chigaku's completed Nichiren's teachings because he identified or equated the *Lotus Sūtra*'s with the fundamental principles or national essence (*kokutai*) of the nation-state of Japan. Ishiwara's also confronted modern Buddhology's discovery that the historical Buddha Śākyamuni probably lived in the fifth or sixth century BCE instead of in 949, as Nichiren and most traditional Māhayana Buddhists believed. This meant that *mappō* would begin significantly later in world time. According to the traditional doctrine *mappō* would commenced the beginning of the fifth five hundred year period following the earthly demise of Śākyamuni. If the modern dating for Buddha's life and death were true, it would mean that Nichiren was not born at the beginning of *mappō* as he himself

believed, but rather in the previous age of *zōhō* (the age of counterfeit dharma when people were not in direct contact with Śākyamuni) instead.[22]

Ishiwara appealed to the well accepted notion of the Buddha's expedient and skillful means in order to obviate such contradictions; then he expediently used Nichirenist thought towards his own imaginative ends. He argued that because people believed medieval Japan to have been contemporary with *mappō*, the Buddha in his wisdom dispatched Nichiren at that time, as an incarnation of Jōgyō, to preach the *Lotus Sūtra*. Ishiwara drew from a passage in the *Kanjin honzonshō* that implies that when especially aggressive righteous activities are called for Jōgyō will incarnate as a "wise ruler" who will admonish foolish rulers and when less aggressive proselytizing is required Jōgyō will manifest as a monk. Ishiwara theorized that Nichiren was a preliminary manifestation of Jōgyō as a monk, but that during the actual period of *mappō* a further appearance of Jōgyō as a wise ruler was due.[23] This wise ruler would lead Japan, he suggests, and Japan would lead the righteous forces of the

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[22] Ibid., 56-6. For the 949 BCE date and Ishiwara's confrontation with modern studies of Buddhism see Stone, "Japanese *Lotus*," 272-3.

[23] *Saishū sensō ron*, especially, 57-58. See also Nishiyama Shigeru, "Jōgyō no adoventisto: Ishiwara Kanji" [Jōgyō's adventist: Ishiwara Kanji], in *Ishiwara Kanji Senshū*, Vol. 8 (Tokyo: Tamaira-bō, 1986), 324-5.

world in the coming cataclysmic conflict that Ishiwara identified both with his understanding of Nichiren and Nichirenism, and the direction world history as revealed by his study of military development and European history. Ishiwara reckoned that *mappō* had actually begun approximately at the time when Westerners both discovered America and first came to India.[24] In other words he drew a connection between worldly decline and the expansion of the imperialist West.

Ishiwara's supported his argument with two sources of authority. First he underscored the proximity of the unification of the world by appealing to a lecture given by Chigaku in 1918, in which the Kokuchūkai's leader suggested that the whole world would convert to the teachings of Nichiren and the *Lotus* in about forty-eight years.[25] At the end of the section on Buddhist prophecy in *Saishū sensōron* Ishiwara further referenced what Chigaku had emphatically proclaimed to the Ceylonese Buddhist leader and reformer

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[24] *Saishū sensō ron*., 57.

[25] Ibid., 58. Ishiwara cited Chigaku's "Honge shūgaku yori mitaru Nihon Kokutai" [Japan's Body Politic from the Perspective of Our Sect's Doctrine], compiled in *Shishiō zenshū* (Tokyo: Shishiō Zenshū Kankōkai, 1931), 367. In the lecture Chigaku used the phrase "*itten shikai kaiki myōhō*" "一天四海皆帰妙法," which literally means "everyone in the world, across the four seas, being led to union with the wondrous law." In Nichiren Buddhism the phrase is shorthand for the whole world being converted to the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* and/or singing the praises of those teachings. See entry in Ishida Mizumaro, *Reibun Bukkyōgo daijiten* (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1997), 52.

Dhārmapala Anagarika at the beginning of the twentieth century namely, that Nichiren prophesied that in the age of Buddhism's decline on the Asian continent (*mappō*) Buddhism would return to the rest of Asia from Japan. At the end of the section of *Saishū sensō ron* on Buddhism, Ishiwara relates a story from Fujii Gyōshō, a monk and founder of the modern Nichiren Buddhist Nipponzan Myōhōji sect who had just returned from the Asian continent. According to Ishiwara, Fujii reported that Ceylonese Buddhists believed that the ruler of a Buddhist country would save them 2,500 years after the Buddha's demise. Ishiwara clearly implies that this country is Japan and that it is from British imperialism and the West in general that Ceylon would be saved.[26] In 1940 Ishiwara did not connect the earthly incarnation of Jōgyō to any particularly person, although it is clear that this person would be the leader of Japan. Later, however, in 1946-1947, he would write that perhaps this incarnation of Jōgyō was Japan's then crown prince (today's emperor). Ishiwara even suggested that because the crown prince was born around the same time that Dhārmapala died he was also somehow a reincarnation of Dhārmapala.[27]

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[26] *Saishū sensō ron*, 58-59.

[27] Ishiwara Kanji, *Nichiren Shōnin oboegaki* [Saint Nichiren memorandum], in *Ishiwara Kanji Senshū*, Vol. 8, 92-4. Note: In both *Saishū sensō ron* and the *Oboegaki* Ishiwara referred to Fujii Gyōshō

Writing in 1908 in his seminal *Reflections on Violence*, Georges Sorel discussed the entry of human beings into extra-rational states that are congruent with the way that Ishiwara conceptualized the power of insight. Sorel too was dissatisfied with a world overly governed by something like the "mechanical law" of scientific rationality; he believed in the soteriological power of what he termed myth. As an ostensible syndicalist or socialist Sorel promoted the myth of the general strike, but he cared very little about the attainment of the traditional goals of strikes and the arrival of socialism. Instead he valued the propensity of general strikes to propel participants into antinomian violence that he contrasted with the order-imposing force of the state, and for Sorel true freedom or justice could be achieved in the realization of this violence and not on a horizon of expectation temporally separated from that violence. In other words the myth of the general strike functioned for Sorel as only a useful, motivating fiction, a performative image, or what Māhayana Buddhism terms *upaya* or "expedient means" (Jpn.,

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藤井行勝 (Fujii the practitioner of victory) of the Myōhō Nipponzan sect; this is almost certainly a reference to Fujii Nichidatsu 藤井日, the sect's founder, who is today honorifically referred to as Sonshi Gyōshōin Nichidatsu Shōnin 尊師行勝日達聖人 (Reverend Practitioner of Victory Saint Nichidatsu). For an account of Fujii and Myōhō Nipponzan's activities on the Asian continent concomitant with pre-1945 Japanese pan-Asianist imperialism see Robert Kisala, *Prophets of Peace: Pacifism and Cultural Identity in Japan's New Religions* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 50-51.

hōben).[28] In this sense one wonders to what extent we might correctly consider Ishiwara's Nichirenism and his concept of the Final War as useful fictions or forms of *upaya* in this sense.

Ishiwara the Nichirenist

Ishiwara was stationed with Japan's Central Chinese Army in Hankou, China between 1920 and 1921. The letters he wrote to his wife Teiko from Hankou constitute a kind of diary reflecting his views as a recent convert to Nichirenism, as well as his experiences as a resident of the treaty port on the Yangzi River. He wrote a remarkable number of letters to her from Hankou, and he mentions Tanaka Chigaku, the Kokuchūkai and Nichirenism very frequently. Perusing these letters can help us trace the development of Ishiwara's understandings of Nichirenist doctrine with reference to specific publications, including both periodicals and full-length books that were written by Chigaku and other people associated with the Nichirenism movement.

For example, in early June 1920 Ishiwara expressed his excitement to Teiko upon receiving his *honzon* (the Nichiren mandala) in the mail from his father, noting that it was a photocopy

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[28] Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. Jeremy Jennings (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), especially 24-29 and 114-119. On violence versus force see 17-18. See translator's "Introduction" xiii-xix for overview of Sorel's key concepts and the uses he proposed for them.

of one Chigaku personally made.[29] In the middle of the same month Ishiwara mentioned receiving a volume of the Kokuchūkai's lexicon, the *Honge seiten daijirin* (Great Dictionary of the Holy Texts of Our Sect),[30] a work published in three volumes under Chigaku's direction in that year. Near the end of the month Ishiwara mentioned the arrival of a special issue of one of the Kokuchūkai's journals, *Dokku* (Poison/Medicine Drum), dedicated to the topic of martyrdom.[31] In July 1920 Ishiwara mentioned that he was reading Chigaku's *Honge shōshaku ron* (On the Passive and Aggressive Proselytizing Methods of Our Sect, 1902) and at this point we can detect a deepening of Ishiwara's understanding of the relationship between Nichiren's teachings according to Chigaku and concepts such as *mappō* and the bodhisattva Jōgyō, along with the Tendai Buddhist doctrine that was the formative matrix of Nichiren's thought. Towards the end of July Ishiwara told Teiko that he had just received the *Kokuchū shinbun* (newspaper of the Kokuchūkai), noting that while there was much of interest to read in the issue, the first article he planned to read was by Chigaku on the Nikolaevsk Incident because Ishiwara, "as usual,"

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[29] Ishiwara Kanji, *Ishiwara Kanji Senshū*, Vol. 1, *Hankou kara tsuma e (shokan)*, 16-7.
[30] Ibid., 23.
[31] Ibid., 30. *Dokku* was published monthly between October 1919 and June 1920. See Ōtani, 55, note 28.

held Chigaku's opinions on such matters in the highest regard.[32] In the middle of August 1920 Ishiwara asked Teiko to send him a copy of Satomi Kishio's *Nichirenshugi no shinkenkyū* (New Research on Nichirenism); Satomi was Chigaku's son and he would later become Ishiwara's companion during much of his 1922-1924 stay in Germany.[33]

In mid-September 1920, Ishiwara reported to Teiko his ambivalence about the arrival of the first issue of the Kokuchūkai's new daily organ, *Tengyō minpō* (Heavenly Task People's News).[34] Ishiwara thought the new, green-colored publication was "humble" looking and thin, but that for people who were already Nichirenists, Ishiwara suggested, the daily would be ideal for their spiritual cultivation.[35] Later, in early October Ishiwara commented in a letter to his wife that *Tengyō minpō* "is a short newspaper, but because [in it] one can easily learn about the great struggles [*dai funtō*] of Tanaka

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[32] *Hankou kara tsuma e*, 74. The nearly forgotten Nikolaevsk Incident occurred in May, 1920, during Japan's Siberian intervention in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, when Soviet partisans slaughtered about 700 Japanese soldiers, Japanese civilians, and White Russians they had taken prisoner at the city of Nikolaevsk at the mouth of the Amur River. Japan demanded compensation, which Moscow never offered, but those responsible were executed by the Soviet state. See entry in Janet Hunter, *Concise Dictionary of Japanese History* (University of California Press, 1984), 146.
[33] *Hankou kara tsuma e*, 99. On Satomi and Ishiwara in Germany see Peattie, 47-8.
[34] *Tengyō Minpō* was published daily between September 1920 and December 1931. Ōtani, 55, note 28.
[35] *Hankou kara tsuma e*, 157.

Sensei I am quite thankful to [be able to] read it."[36] In January 1921 Ishiwara mentioned the accomplishments of the "great teacher Tanaka" (Tanaka *dai sensei*) on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, noting that one accomplishment was completion of the *Honge myōshū shikimoku no kōen oyobi sono kōen no kōenroku no kankō* (lectures on the regulations of our wondrous sect and the publishing of the record of those lectures). Ishiwara noted that the published volume would cost twenty-five yen, and told his wife there was no pressing need to buy it, but that she should purchase a copy if she happened to have the chance.[37] Lastly, in a late-January 1921 letter, Ishiwara related to his wife how he enjoyed reading about the end of the year lectures and other proceedings at the Kokuchūkai's Miho headquarters. In particular, he described how moving it was that participants at Miho informally performed "Sado," Chigaku's dramatic work about Nichiren's exile."[38]

Ishiwara read and reread the Nichirenist documents he acquired while in Hankou, and he vicariously participated in Kokuchūkai activities from a distance through his constant reading of Kokuchūkai organs. In this regard we can discern three interrelated processes: his technical knowledge of Nichirenist thought became

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[36] Ibid., 180.
[37] Ibid., 267.
[38] Ibid., 279.

increasingly complete, his veneration of Chigaku became more pronounced, and he came to apply Chigaku's Nichirenist thought to the real-world situations he personally experienced and confronted as an officer in the Japanese army. A March 1920 Hankou letter, for instance, expresses Ishiwara's desire to lead a significant (*igi ga aru*) life, continuing to explain to Teiko that he wanted to "be guided by the reverend heart of the Original Buddha [*Honbutsu*]." He furthermore wrote that he possessed the "holy imperial institution" of Japan as his center. He added lastly that he did not yet understand the "deep logic" of Nichirenism, but that on an "instinctual" level he was in "profound sympathy" with it, especially with reference to its propensity to unify the world spiritually.

In the same letter Ishiwara suggests to his wife that if he were able to revere the Honbutsu day and night with proper and abundant faith it would be possible to turn the city of Hankou, which he characterized as dirty, intensely hot and drunkenly frenzied, into the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light (Jakkōdo, a paradisiacal pure land in the Nichiren/Tendai tradition).[39] This letter makes it clear that Ishiwara, following his recent conversion to Nichirenism, was still unsure of his knowledge of the movement's teachings. But we at this point we can perceive several indications of Ishiwara's

[39] Ibid., 212-3.

burgeoning Nichirenist transformation. First, he was becoming approvingly aware of the fundamental, innovative connections that Chigaku made between the Honbutsu and Japan's imperial institution. Secondly, Ishiwara was beginning to identify his own life's work or mission with *sekai tōitsu* or world unification, seeing himself as an instrument of a Nichirenism that he understood as a force synthesizing a universal, immanent Buddha and the Japanese nation-state. Finally and most importantly, Ishiwara was coming to believe that faith in an Original Buddha, which was intimately connected to Japan and its imperial institution, was a force capable of transforming the mundane world into a kind of paradise. We should particularly note the following: Ishiwara communicated to Teiko his conviction that even a treaty port crowded with the concessions of Western imperialist nations on a river in the center of East Asia could be transformed into a paradise of eternally tranquil light through the power of faith in the Buddha of the *Lotus Sūtra*, a Buddha combined inextricably with the nation-state of Japan and the Japanese emperor.

Through reading Chigaku's technical discourses on Nichirenist ideas Ishiwara learned to employ the vocabulary and concepts embodied in works such as *Honge shōshaku ron*, and he consequently gained increasing confidence in his basic comprehension of Chigaku's and Nichiren's ideas. Ishiwara's letters

make it clear that he understood the teachings of Nichiren through the lens (or filter) of Chigaku's thought. For example, in late July of 1920 Ishiwara told his wife how difficult he found it to understand Nichiren's writings and he let her know that Chigaku's works served him as an indispensable guide.[40] Ishiwara's growing respect for Chigaku is evident from the way that he increasingly referred to the Kokuchūkai leader as the "great teacher" (*dai-sensei*) Tanaka. Conversely, over time his discussions of doctrine became more infrequent. Instead Ishiwara expressed a reductively simpler faith in Buddhism according to Chigaku. These developments are mirrored by an increase in Ishiwara's use of the *daimoku* (*namu Myōhō Rengekyō*/hail the *Lotus Sūtra* of the Wondrous Law) as a salutation at the end of as well as in the middle of his letters. Towards the end of Ishiwara's Hankou period his letters also express the belief that Nichiren himself did not completely clarify his own view of the Japanese *kokutai* (national principles). Ishiwara believed, however, that during the Meiji period Chigaku had clearly revealed the "secret meaning" of Nichiren's teachings, namely that Japan's destiny was to become the seat of a universal paradise (literally a dharma-land) in this world. In clarifying the meaning of *kokutai* in this way,

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[40] Ibid., 67-9.

according to Ishiwara, Chigaku completed the teachings of Nichiren and by extension Buddhism.[41]

The Hankou letters also demonstrate that Ishiwara linked his erotic or romantic love for his wife with Nichirenist doctrine. He clearly linked his feelings for her with reliance on the immanence of the Honbutsu, and faith in both the *Lotus Sūtra* and the act of chanting that sutra's praise with the *daimoku*. Perhaps the greatest example of this appears in a letter Ishiwara wrote in early August, 1920. In it he expressed his inspiration in life

> …was completely thanks to nothing other than the Great Saint [Nichiren]. *Namu Myōhō Rengekyō*. Moreover [my inspiration] is truly nothing other than the Tei with whom I share the highest love. *Namu Myōhō Rengekyō*. … I first of all united with the Honbutsu. Then it became possible for me to know I have completely achieved immersion in Tei's infinite love. … [O]ur becoming one body furthermore depended upon being absolutely united with the Honbutsu. I have seen up to now what people in general call divine transformation or love, and so on. It harbors an underlying selfishness, and because of this there are many dangers. But with two people whose connection is strictly dependent upon *namu Myōhō Rengekyō*, whatever might occur in the midst of the Dharma World of the universe, there is no reason to fear anything in the least. In this place of greatest happiness, from this place true inspiration is born. *Namu Myōhō Rengekyō*. *Namu Myōhō Rengekyō*. Tei, won't you please say it together with me? *Namu Myōhō Rengekyō*.[42]

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[41] Ibid., 224-5.
[42] Ibid., 83-4.

Later in the same letter Ishiwara wrote that his wife's love sometimes made him feel an electrical charge run through his body, as if he was intoxicated with "the highest happiness that a human being can feel." Elsewhere in the letter he wrote that at times he was suddenly moved to shout the *daimoku* because of her love, that receiving one letter from her was like "100 years of religious practice," and that hearing from her made him feel more power than he could feel after reading "100 volumes."[43]

While in China Ishiwara clearly linked his love for Teiko with his burgeoning faith. More generally one of the more interesting aspects of the Hankou letters is the way that they evidence a thoroughly human and even emotionally touching side of Ishiwara in his affection and longing for his wife, and one is even tempted to speculate that his thorough embrace of Nichirenist religiosity over the period was in some way related to her absence from his everyday life. Nevertheless in the Hankou letters we also observe the development of a relationship between Nichirenism and an ethical sense that would characterize the rest of Ishiwara's life. His proclamation that the great truth of the universe is the Buddha's *myōhō* (wondrous law) ,

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[43] Ibid., 147. It is not clear to what reading material Ishiwara was referring, but it would be safe to conjecture that he meant Buddhist and/or Nichirenist texts.

for example in a September 1920 letter,[44] has significant ramifications for the way that he viewed history, international relations, and Japan's proper world-historical role.

In terms of a basic ethical stance, Nichirenism encouraged Ishiwara to view the things of this world that people commonly regard as mundane or even profane as actually or potentially divine. For instance, in a December 1920 letter Ishiwara noted that in the Kokuchūkai there is no discrimination between male and female.[45] In the same letter Ishiwara connected the example of Chigaku, who himself was close to Nichiren's own example, to our own ability to understand and actualize the idea that ordinary people can become Buddhas.[46] He implied that Chigaku had managed to actualize the Buddha within himself and through his activities and teachings, and that furthermore we ordinary and defiled beings could all do likewise.

Nevertheless, for Ishiwara the vehicle through which the Buddha could be actualized in this world was not the individual. It was the nation. In a letter written early in his stay in China Ishiwara discussed political realities on the continent, writing that Chinese were without question not innately inferior. He blamed China's

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[44] Ibid., 126.
[45] On Chigaku's remarkably egalitarian stance on the equality of women see Richard M. Jaffe, *Neither Monk nor Layman: Clerical Marriage in Modern Japanese Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 180-1.
[46] *Hankou kara tsuma e*., 229.

problems on the country's lack of national unity and the meddling of Western Powers, but he blamed even more Japanese petty interests that prevented Japanese from assisting China. Here he argued that Japan as a whole could be strong enough to confront the West and save China, but only through faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*. In other words, Japan as a collective embodiment of the Buddha in this world could and would compassionately save China (and the rest of Asia) from the evils of Western imperialism. In the same letter, Ishiwara also blamed to some extent Japan's inability to act "morally" vis-à-vis China on Japan's infatuation with the individualistic values of the West. That is to say, for Ishiwara, Western influences on Japan prevented the country's potential realization of Buddhahood. Ishiwara ends the letter by urging the Japanese to chant the *daimoku*, not only in unison with each other, but also with the sun and the moon. Ishiwara thus implied a profound connection between the Japanese nation-as-Buddha and the fundamental and most important forces of nature. [47]

Ishiwara's conception of the relationship between Nichirenism and Japan's world-historical role developed over time. In September 1920 Ishiwara stated that "… at long last all over Japan there is a foundation [of people] chanting *namu Myōhō Rengekyō*."

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[47] Ibid., 24-5.

This, he believed, was an early step in the processes of Japan's becoming Buddha. He then told his wife that following Japan's transformation into a Buddha-Land, the whole world would become unified with the Buddha. Ishiwara was beginning to express these concepts in the technical terminology of Nichirenist thought, with Japan as the *honmon kaidan* (ordination platform of the origin teaching) and the world's transformation as *itten shikai kaiki myōhō* (everyone in the world, across the four seas, being led to union with the wondrous law).[48] Later in the month and in another letter, Ishiwara implored Teiko to remember the importance of their being a "*Lotus Sūtra* husband and wife" (*Hokkekyō-teki fūfu*), singling out especially the importance of her role as a "*Lotus Sūtra* wife." Such

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[48] Ibid., 128. For a discussion of the meaning of the *honmon (no) kaidan*, which literally means "ordination platform of the origin teaching," see Stone's "By Imperial Edict and Shogunal Decree," 193-219. She explains that Chigaku hoped the modern Japanese state would decree the establishment of an ordination platform for Nichiren Buddhism, as he believed Nichiren would have advocated. However, in *Original Enlightenment*, 288-90, Stone notes the way that in the Nichiren tradition the *honmon no kaidan* took on a much broader significance. Believers came to conceptualize the platform as *ri no kaidan* (ordination platform in principle), which could be anywhere one embraces the *Lotus Sūtra*. That place, wherever it maybe would then be the site of awakening, and this means that the idea of the *honmon no kaidan* is deeply linked to ideas such as that this world, just the way it is, is the Buddha's pure land. In other words the construction of the *kaidan* can be synonymous with actualizing the immanence of the Buddha in this world. Importantly, Chigaku wanted the modern Japanese state to sponsor the construction of the "ordination platform," but this had almost nothing to do with the ordination of monks and everything to do with the marriage of the Japanese state and *Lotus* Buddhism.

matters were important, Ishiwara stated in this particular letter, because they were instrumental in fulfilling "Japan's mission."[49] In yet another letter written in the same month he also stressed the exemplary nature of Japan's culture, which he held was deeply rooted in the country's "becoming-*Lotus Sūtra*" (*Hokkekyō-ka*).[50]

The ethical or moral sense that Ishiwara developed together with his Nichirenism directly addressed not only Japan's "mission." With increasing frequency he also addressed the real relations between Japanese and other East Asians in the present. For example, in early December 1920, Ishiwara discussed the "Korea problem," castigating petty Japanese officials who oppressed the Korean people. He claimed that before Japan annexed Korea, local officials also oppressed people with heavy taxes and inhumane treatment, but contemporary Koreans had forgotten this. Nonetheless, Ishiwara adamantly scolded his countrymen for not treating Koreans better. At this point Ishiwara stopped short of arguing for the necessity of outright Korean independence, but his words were vague. He wrote that "whether or not [Japanese] realize the great ideal of '*itten shikai kaiki myōhō*'" depended on "how [Japanese] govern Korea." The stakes involved exceeded concerns with Korea alone, he added, noting that what hung in the balance was the foundation of "Sino-

[49] *Hankou kara tsuma e*., 138.
[50] Ibid., 147.

Japanese amity, social problems, everything …" (*Nisshin-shinzen demo, shakai mondai demo, subete demo*). Ishiwara ends this letter, "Ahh, will we unite with the *myōhō*? ahh, will we unite with the *myōhō*?" (*aa, myōhō naru kana*, *aa, myōhō naru kana*).[51]

During his Hankou period Ishiwara developed connections between his growing Nichirenist faith and a moral imperative to confront injustices that he connected not only with Western imperialism, but also to the failings of Japanese themselves in their treatment of other Asians. He put his thought into the language of such concepts as *honmon no kaidan* (the ordination platform of the origin teaching as an ideal Japan) and the achievement of *itten shikai kaiki myōhō*. Such concepts spelled out the implications of Ishiwara's incipient moral imperative, amounting to the conviction that by whatever means necessary Japan had to become a truly righteous nation-state and use this righteousness to transform the world into a new and better place. As we shall see, in Ishiwara's later thought this new and better place became one where anything is possible, but only through human activity in this world, in other words, through unheard of developments in science and technology. However, before discussing such matters more fully I will detail the way that Ishiwara's later thought depended upon terminologies and

[51] Ibid., 232-3.

concepts that connected it to broader regional concerns and pan-Asian sentiments

Ōdō/Hadō

The binary opposition of *ōdō* 王道and *hadō* 覇道 is an enigmatic presence in the work that Ishiwara crafted, delivered, and published into the 1930s and early 1940s, which culminated in but did not end with his 1940 lecture and subsequently published extended essay on the Final War. It came to form an essential basis for his grander soteriological, world-historical vision. *Ōdō* literally means the "way of the king," but it is often more figuratively and I would argue accurately translated as the "way of righteousness" or the "way of benevolence." *Hadō* means something like the "way of the despot" or the "way of the hegemon." *Ōdō* and *hadō* originated with Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism in China**.** Mencius in particular used the terms in his efforts to transform Confucianism from a philosophical discourse that primarily concerned interpersonal relationships at the local, mostly familial level into a discourse involving proper political behavior with respect to centralized state authority.[52] When we read Ishiwara deploying these concepts in the

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[52] On Mencius and *ōdō*/*hadō* (transliterated from Chinese as "*wang-tao*"/ "*ba-tao*") see Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 49-51;

context of modern East Asia or the modern world it would be easy to mistakenly believe that in advocating *ōdō* Ishiwara was calling for universal reverence towards Japan's emperor. The way that Ishiwara disparagingly characterizes the West as fundamentally imbued with *hadōshugi* (hadōism) only exacerbates the appearance of his apparent jingoism. However, Ishiwara intended something strikingly different. In order to understand this we must delve into a genealogy of the concepts in question that begins with something much closer to Ishiwara (and us) than Confucius, Mencius or even the Tokugawa Period Japanese who sometimes employed the vocabulary of *ōdō*.[53]

According to Peattie, Ishiwara first encountered the concepts of *ōdō* and *hadō* when he was a cadet at the Tokyo Military Academy (1905-1907), and the person responsible for introducing him to the conceptual pair was Nanbu Jirō, a classmate's father. Nanbu was a pro-revolution, Japanese activist in China during the Meiji Period. However, as Peattie notes, a discourse on *ōdō* versus *hadō* had much broader currency.[54] Tachibana Shiraki, a Sinologist, journalist and employee of the South Manchurian Railway Research Department,

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Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy, Vol. 1: The Period of Philosophers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 118-20.
[53] For information on the various uses of the *ōdō* concept in Tokugawa Japan see H. D. Harootunian, *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).
[54] Peattie, 33-4.

influenced many Japanese with an interest in affairs in continental Asia, and he unceasingly advocated the promotion of *ōdō* over *hadō*.[55] During the pre-Manchurian Incident period when Ishiwara was Operations Officer with the Kantō Army Staff (1928-1932), Tachibana participated in the affairs of the Daiyūkai (Great Hero Summit Association), which largely consisted of petty bourgeois Japanese in Manchuria.

During this period Ishiwara became closely acquainted with individuals, including Tachibana, who were collectively articulating a vision of Manchuria as a "racial paradise."[56] In fact although Tachibana denied connection with "radicals" in the Kantō Army before the Japanese took over Manchuria, Ishiwara recorded a meeting with Tachibana in March 1931.[57] In early October 1931, less than a month after the Manchurian Incident, Tachibana met yet again with Ishiwara, this time along with Ishiwara's co-conspirator in the previous month's momentous events, Itagaki Seishirō. Subsequently

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[55] Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*, (Oxford, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 63.
[56] Peattie, 160.
[57] Lincoln Li, *The China Factor in Modern Japanese Thought: The Case of Tachibana Shiraki, 1881-1945* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), 51. Li takes it for granted that Tachibana considered Ishiwara a "radical." I am not so sure this was the case. At the time and thereafter Ishiwara had an extremely ambiguous image, one that tends to challenge often facilely conceptualized and applied terminology such as "radical," "rightist," "nationalist," "fascist," and "imperialist."

Tachibana became actively involved in the political affairs within the puppet-state.[58]

Tachibana based his utopian vision in Manchuria upon principles concomitant with a concept of *ōdō* that we can directly link to the thought of Sun Yat-sen, who inspired Tachibana from the time of the Japanese intellectual's youth to challenge the idea of Western superiority. Sun encouraged Tachibana to begin to think of the *ōdō*/*hadō* confrontation in terms of a struggle between an East Asia led by Japan and the West.[59] Sun affected the thought of a whole generation of Japanese regarding the "China problem," with a speech that he gave in Kobe, Japan in 1924, at least indirectly influencing both Tachibana and Ishiwara (who was studying in Europe at the time). The Speech, "Da Yaxiyazhuyi" (Greater Asianism) first of all praised Japan's modernization, focusing on Japan's 1899 overcoming of the extraterritoriality that had been imposed by the West, and more importantly, Japan's victory over Russia in 1905. Sun recalled for his Japanese listeners that when crossing the Suez Canal just after the

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[58] Li, 53.

[59] Duara, *Sovereignty*, 63; Saji Yoshihiko, *Ishiwara Kanji: tensai gunryakusha no shōzō* [Ishiwara Kanji: Image of a brilliant military strategist], (Tokyo: Keizaikai, 2001), 502. On the topic of the relationship between *ōdō*, Tachibana, Sun Yat-sen, the idea of "racial harmony," and the management of the Manchurian puppet-state see Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), especially, 285-7.

war, local people had mistaken him for Japanese. Even after they learned his actual nationality they rejoiced with him over the Japanese demonstration that the White imperialist nations were not invincible. Sun derided the Western response to the Russo-Japanese war, characterizing it as an attitude of "blood being thicker than water," noting that the British, while technically politically allied with the Japanese, became unhappy upon hearing news of Japanese victory. In the face of this racist solidarity among White imperialist powers Sun called for the unity of all Asians. A common Asian culture, Sun hoped, would be the basis of an adequate resistance to imperialist oppression.[60]

Next Sun began his discussion of *ōdō* (*wangdao*) and *hadō* (*badao*). He used the example of Nepal to make his claims, pointing out that the Himalayan country continued to pay tribute to China in the nineteenth century, despite a decline in Qing coercive power by that time. Later, Sun continued, the British had to provide Nepal with cash subsidies in order to ensure the flow of Gurkhas into the British military. According to Sun's logic, imperial China did not garner the respect or reverence of the Nepalese through the employment of threats or violence, nor through monetary incentives, but the British

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[60] Prasenjit Duara, "Transnationalism and the Predicament of Sovereignty," *The American Historical Review* 102, No. 4 (Oct., 1997), 1038-9.

could only ensure their hegemony over Nepal by what was in essence bribery. For Sun imperial China therefore exemplified *ōdō* as rule through benevolence while the British were an example of *hadō* as despotism, or rule through coercive, extra-moral force. Lastly, Sun ended his speech with the prediction of "an apocalyptic culture war between the forces representing the aggressive militarism of the West and the moral pacifism of the East, and he urged his listeners to strengthen the forces of peace in their nation."[61]

As Prasenjit Duara indicates, Sun's discourse on *ōdō*/*hadō* was irreducibly modern in a particularly twentieth-century sense. Duara rightly locates the matrix of Western imperialist ideology in a social Darwinism that justified the West's domination over the non-West with reference to the West's supposed possession of "a superior, enlightened civilization or History," whereas the non-West supposedly had no "History or national territory," making the people and territories of the non-West legitimate objects of Western domination. When non-Western elites began to construct their own nationalisms they formulated "the present of the desired territorial nation as the subject or agent of History to which belonged the entire past that had occurred on this delimited but maximized surface." In other words they conceptually formed nations where there previously

[61] Ibid., 1039. The quotation is Duara's paraphrase.

were none, mirroring the territorial nation-states of what Duara calls Europe's "high nationalism."

However, by the time Sun made his 1924 speech in Japan he had begun to develop a nationalism that arose from the same social Darwinist matrix, but one that also corresponded more directly with "discursive conditions that produced nationalism [in the non-West]: transnational imperialism." In other words Sun's pan-Asianism manifested relationally and coevally with an imperialism that was equally transnational in its aspirations. Sun accordingly employed the *ōdō*/*hadō* dichotomy to posit the superiority of East Asia at the level of "civilization" defined not just in terms of a geographically delimited transnational zone, but also as an embodiment of a developmental process. From Sun's perspective then, especially within the post-World War I historical milieu, an *ōdō*-based Asian civilization could, and had to develop global, transnational civilization in ways that the West could and would not. This development would overcome the imperialism plaguing East Asia, but it would also defeat once and for all the coercion, violence, exploitation, and despotic social, political and economic relationships signified by the word *hadō*/*badao*.[62]

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[62] Ibid., 1039-40. On the connection between what he calls forms of "redemptive transnationalism" such as Sun's pan-Asianism, see Ibid., 1033.

That Sun and his pan-Asianism would speak to Japanese in this way is highly ironic from the perspective of the present, considering that one of the few things the People's Republic of China and Taiwan officially agree upon is Sun's greatness,[63] while few East Asian governments would disagree about the evils of Japanese imperialism. It is not as if Sun constructed a singular pan-Asianism—as opposed to plural pan-Asianisms with multiple sites of emergence—that Japanese such as Tachibana, Ishiwara and others either faithfully promulgated or perverted into the ideological bases of Japanese imperialism. Lineages of historical determination are never so simple nor from historians' perspectives so decidable. Nevertheless, Sun did profoundly affect the way that Tachibana and Ishiwara thought about the "China problem." In a 1940 work Ishiwara in fact directly referenced the text of "Greater Asianism." In this context, Ishiwara defended the ideal that Japan could and should remain the force for the liberation of Asia and the independence of Asian nations.[64] Considering the way that Sun ended "Greater Asianism" we cannot escape the impression that Ishiwara was answering Sun's call to action when he caused the outbreak of the

[63] See Marie-Claire Bergère, *Sun Yat-sen*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1-8.
[64] Ishiwara, "Tōa Renmei kensetsu yōkō" [general plan for the construction of an East Asian League] in *Ishiwara Kanji Senshū*, vol. 6, 117-8.

Manchurian Incident, as well as with his life's work of fostering the Final War as the war that would establish the possibility of progress beyond the impasses of actually existing modernity. It is therefore not surprising that Ishiwara adopted the *ōdō*/*hadō* vocabulary in his articulation of that war's rationale.

Ishiwara used the concept of *hadō* in a constellation with other concepts to illustrate the hypocrisy of the imperialist West, along with the West's inability to move history forward beyond the overdetermined impasse represented by World War I. He conversely used the concept of *ōdō* to characterize an Asia free of the West's manifold problems and it was here that Ishiwara undeniably entered the grey zone between fantastic, modernist utopianism and the legitimization of Japanese imperialism. Thus in Ishiwara's deployment of the *ōdō*/*hadō* discourse we can clearly see both sides of the various fundamental contradictions that characterized Ishiwara's own thought: for example he excelled when it came to pointing out the failings of the West but was sometimes although not always unable to discern the same sorts of shortcomings which existed at the foundations of his own belief in the essential goodness of Japan and East Asia.

At one point in *Saishū sensō ron* Ishiwara reduced what was at stake in the Final War to the war's role in determining whether

Japan’s emperor would become the “world’s emperor” or whether the American president would be able to exercise hegemony over the world. Deciding this question, he added, would determine human destiny thereafter. What the choice between emperor and president boiled down to, Ishiwara argued, was the choice between *hadō* and *ōdō*, and which of these oppositional guiding principles would unify the globe.[65] In isolation such statements suggest simple-minded chauvinism coupled with extreme conservatism. Ishiwara seemed to be baldly stating the superiority of monarchial sovereignty over the United States’ sovereignty of the people, and no matter what shortcomings “democracy” may characteristically have in practice his opinions may seem difficult for many of us to swallow. One moreover wonders how Ishiwara could have believed that US political forms were somehow more despotic and thereby more unjust than Japan’s “way of the king.” However, if we examine other texts Ishiwara wrote regarding the question of the *ōdō*/*hadō* dichotomy during the late 1930s and early 1940s, we begin to understand that what he meant was significantly more sophisticated than one might initially imagine.

To supplement *Saishū sensō ron*’s discourse on the Final War Ishiwara completed a work titled “‘Saishū sensō’ ni kansuru shitsugi

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[65] *Saishū sensō ron* in Ishiwara *Kanji Senshū*, vol. 3, 46.

ōtō" (questions and answers regarding the Final War) in the early Fall of 1941. Here he restated his conviction that the Final War was a contest between the two fundamental principles of *hadō* and *ōdō*, and he identified these with on the one hand the US and its president as the potential despotic leader of the world, and on the other hand an East Asia coupled with the Japanese emperor as a prospective "world's emperor."[66] In the 1942 text Ishiwara also explicitly claimed that such ideas accorded with the teachings of Nichiren.[67] We get a clearer picture of what Ishiwara meant when at the end of the "questions and answers" text he unequivocally associated *hadō* with the illegitimate deployment of violence. Citing Nietzsche either consciously or otherwise, Ishiwara first notes that "Europe is nothing more than a peninsula of Asia." In contrast with the European conceit that the West alone was the bearer of human progress,[68] Ishiwara next argued that within the confined space of Europe too many contentious ethnic groups had gathered and that overabundance of nation-states had formed. Ishiwara claimed that the "hadōist"

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[66] "'Saishū sensō' ni kansuru shitsugi ōtō" in Ishiwara *Kanji Senshū*, vol. 3, 73.
[67] Ibid., 74.
[68] Cf., this passage from Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: A Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Vintage: New York, 1966), 65, "If we stand with fear and reverence before these tremendous remnants of what human beings once were, we will in the process suffer melancholy thoughts about old Asia and its protruding peninsula of Europe, which, in contrast to Asia, wants to represent the 'progress of man.'"

spirit that is the hallmark of so-called Western civilization was the "natural outcome" of a history of intense ethnic competition within the European "peninsula." This history of violent struggle, Ishiwara argued, along with an accompanying unparalleled development of military technologies and strategies within Europe over the centuries, led to the West's domination of the world.[69]

Ishiwara became involved in the Tōa Renmei Kyōkai (East Asian League Association) soon after its 1939 founding in Tokyo by Kimura Takeo, an old civilian associate of his from the early days of the Manchurian experiment,. The aims of the association mainly derived from ideas Ishiwara had publicized over the previous decade, centering on notions of "racial harmony" and "cooperation" within East Asia, and for this reason, however counterfactually, Ishiwara was the association's founder in the collective mind of the Japanese public.[70] In subsequent years Ishiwara frequently published various works in support of Tōa Renmei Kyōkai, and the ideal of an East Asian League more generally. Several of these writings elaborated on the *ōdō*/*hadō* discourse and the past and present historical significance of *ōdō*'s supremacy over *hadō* in East Asia. Ishiwara's discourse on *ōdō* and *hadō* in this regard was somewhere between

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[69] "'Saishū sensō' ni kansuru," 80-1. Cf., *Saishū sensō ron* in *Senshū* vol. 3, 11.
[70] Peattie, 322-3.

description and prescription, representation and performance in its intent.

In a long work composed in 1939, *Tōa Renmei kensetsu yōkō* (General Plan for the Construction of an East Asian League), Ishiwara illustrated the hope he and others who pined for East Asian union invested in Manchuria as the "paradise" of racial cooperation. In this context called Manchuria the "country of *ōdō*." Later Ishiwara admitted that by that time and in the context of what Japanese were calling the "China Incident"—the Japanese military attempt to consolidate control of all of China beginning in 1937, what many historians now call the Second Sino-Japanese War—Chinese people had some basis for calling Japanese hadōiosts, or in other words characterizing them as despotic hegemons. Ishiwara defended an idealized Japan by arguing that all of its seemingly questionable behavior was, or should be, in the interest of Asia in general. Japan, Ishiwara argued, had to "imitate Western hadōism in order to maintain *ōdō* civilization." However, Ishiwara criticized the Japanese, suggesting that they confused the civilization that they had been forced to imitate with their more basic ōdōist identity. He wrote that Japanese needed to keep the "two layers" of reality in question separate; Japanese needed to resort to what amounted to activities

very much resembling Western imperialism, but only in order to defeat the *hadō* civilization that was at the root of that imperialism.[71]

In a 1940 work, *Shintaisei to Tōa Renmei* [the New Order and the East Asian League], Ishiwara further characterized the differences between *ōdō* and *hadō*, stating in this connection that the West had forms of morality, but that they differed significantly from those of Asia. Westerners, according to him, struggled "valiantly in matters of scientific progress," while at the same time they were "utilitarian" in the moral sphere. For them, he wrote, power, force and coercion always come first. In the brutal world of the West, as Ishiwara characterized it, the ultimately utilitarian laws or rules had only to do with the relative preservation of peace in a context where selfish maximization of power on the part of individuals was regarded as wholly legitimate. In this connection Ishiwara stated that "mercantilist ethics" (*shōgyō dōtoku*) characterized the West. In general he noted that in general Japanese and Asians idealized moral government (*tokuch i*徳治), while in the West government was much more a matter of impersonal laws enforced for their own sake (*hōchi* 法治).[72]

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[71] "Tōa Renmei kensetsu yōkō," 104-5.
[72] *Shintaisei to Tōa Renmei*, 207-8.

In *Shintaisei to Tōa Renmei* Ishiwara further argued that Chinese could even provide a kind of moral corrective to the Japanese propensity to adopt at least outwardly the hadōist civilization of the West. Noting that Japan had accepted foreign influences to the point of "frivolity," Ishiwara contended that this was the source of modern Japan's power and all around success, but he expressed alarm regarding the way that the adaptation of *hadō* in Japan had estranged Japanese from proper "morality." In this situation, argued Ishiwara, Chinese, who had been more reluctant to adopt the foreign, and Japanese, who had been overly eager at times to adopt foreign ways, could each fill in for the others' shortcomings. Doing so, according to Ishiwara, would form a basis for greater racial cooperation thereafter. Ishiwara continued his discussion of *ōdō*/*hadō* by further lamenting Japan's flirtation with hadōism in its imitation of the West, and expressing even more admiration for Chinese conservatism. In particular he lamented the way that Japan's unfortunate embrace of hadōism had caused the resentment of fellow East Asians, and he called for "deep self reflection" on the part of his countrymen.[73]

Next in the same work, Ishiwara made the point that the "East Asian League is the *ōdō* league," and by this he expressed a vision of *ōdō* that seemed to exceed nationalism narrowly defined. He wrote

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[73] Ibid., 209.

that despite the tutelage of the West in the ways of *hadō*, "recently Japanese have awakened from their dependence on the Anglo-Americans." Clearly, what Ishiwara meant by *hadō* in this case implies imperialism foremost. But, as his discourse on the utilitarian, amoral legal systems of the West indicates, Ishiwara included forms of instrumental and impersonal rationality in his definition of *hadō*. In the 1940 context of what he regarded as Japan's decreasing need to learn from the West, moreover, Ishiwara quite explicitly detached *ōdō* as a Japanese and Asian political ideal from the bedrock of orthodox Japanese nationalism at the time, the imperial institution. Specifically, Ishiwara made a distinction between the term *kōdō*, literally the "imperial way," and *ōdō*, arguing that *kōdō* smacks thoroughly of a deplorably "self-righteous Japanism" that was contrary to the true national principles (*kokutai*) of Japan. Nevertheless, Ishiwara believed it would be "natural" to revere the Japanese emperor as the leader of an East Asian confederation, so long as the emperor himself upholds the principles of *ōdō*. [74]

In this context Ishiwara rhetorically cited the emperor's "miraculous spirit" (*reimyō*) and his ageless propensity to assist in the establishment of eternal peace in heaven and earth. It is perhaps wise to remember that Ishiwara was writing and speaking in the context of

[74] Ibid., 210.

Japan in 1940. The military police or the Special Higher Police would have been monitoring every one of his utterances, so it is reasonable to consider that he felt pressure to give lip service to orthodoxy. At any rate however, by 1940 Ishiwara was not giving primacy to the emperor nor Japan in his political discourse. Instead the most *ōdō* was far more important.[75] By 1940 Ishiwara also unhesitatingly castigated the violence of Japanese imperialism, while at the same time pragmatically viewing Japan as the only nation with the ability to lead an East Asian confederacy of nations; for better or worse, Ishiwara believed that Japan's industrially and militarily advanced status necessitated Japanese leadership in the struggle against White imperialism. For this very reason, he argued that from a moral perspective Japanese had to express love and respect for the "various peoples" of East Asia, or in other words Japanese had to win them over by means of *ōdō*.[76] It may seem incredible that Ishiwara contradicted contemporary Japanese commons sense regarding the superiority of Japanese vis-à-vis other Asians to such a great extent. But Ishiwara tended to back up seeming platitudes with advocacy of more concrete measures, as when he often warned against such deeds as Japanese indiscriminately grabbing land in Manchuria.[77]

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[75] See Ibid., 210, 211.
[76] Ibid, 211-2.
[77] See for example, *Tōa Renmei kensetsu yōkō*, 104-5.

Liberalism/Controlism

Ishiwara also employed another binary, that of liberalism (*jiyūshugi*) and controlism (*tōseishugi*), ultimately conflating controlism with totalitarianism (*zentaishugi*). He used this binary to register what he read as global trends during the interwar period, as well as to chart Japan's prospective course through development towards the end of victory in the Final War. *Saishū sensō ron* reveals that by supplanting liberalism with controlism Ishiwara meant to shift away from an ideology of laissez-faire, market-driven capitalism. He associated this ideology for the most part with Great Britain and imitators of the British model in Japan. Instead Ishiwara advocated a shift to state controlled economies on the part of nation-states, and he noted the examples of nation-states that he deemed to be at the cutting edge in a march towards the future.

Along these lines, Ishiwara criticized the British in the current European conflict for recognizing the inanity of the Versailles system, while still wishing to return to the "principle of liberalism" after Hitler's defeat.[78] Ishiwara also approvingly cited the Nazi will to construct a "cooperative community" (*renmei kyōdōtai*) in Europe, indicating the relationship between controlism and forms of extra-national, regional unification that Ishiwara obviously advocated for

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[78] *Saishūsensō ron*, 40.

East Asia as well.[79] But more to the point, Ishiwara praised both the Soviets for their breakthrough in shifting from "liberalism" to "controlism,"[80] and the Germans for their ability to harness national will through a state managed industrial policy, to the extent that they were in his estimation able to engineer a "second industrial revolution."[81]

In "Shintaisei to Tōa Renmei," a 1940 lecture that Ishiwara gave on the occasion of the anniversary of the founding of the Manchurian puppet-state, he again noted that "liberalism is in retreat." He also explained that the Germans had been pushed into their rejection of liberalism by the Versailles Treaty, the regime of Chiang Kai-shek had been pushed towards controlism/totalitarianism by oppression from Japan, and the Soviets had been pushed into totalitarianism—something contrary to the teachings of Marx, Ishiwara noted—because of the intervention of capitalist nation-states following the Bolshevik Revolution. Adversity that forced these three conversions to controlism/totalitarianism was for Ishiwara similar to the Hegelian "ruse of history." In other words, however it

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[79] Ibid., 41.
[80] Ibid., 45.
[81] Ibid, 49-50. According to Ishiwara he borrowed the "second industrial revolution" concept from a book titled *Nachisu kokubō keizai ron* (On the National Defense of the Nazis) by Kamei Shinichirō.

happened and wherever it happened, the retreat of liberalism was a very good thing as far as Ishiwara was concerned.[82]

In "Shintaisei to Tōa Renmei" Ishiwara also yet again recounted a history of warfare, this time explicitly connecting it to a history of political ideology and practice and with respect to questions of liberalism versus controlism/totalitarianism. He argued that in the age of absolutism (*senseishugi*) preceding the French Revolution armies in Europe consisted of professional soldiers or mercenaries. He noted that the French revolution led to conscription, but inexperienced peasant conscripts were not suited for the older style of warfare in which lines of musketeers faced each other in firing lines, so they became something like armies of skirmishers (*sanpei*), meaning that soldiers were freer to act independently. According to Ishiwara, this freedom corresponded with the age of liberalism. The situation changed, he argued, because of the unprecedented firepower of weapons used during the First World War. For example, soldiers were pinned down during that conflict by machine gun tactics, and they were no longer able to move freely and independently. At the same time, Ishiwara argued, commanding armies became exceedingly difficult and greater coordination of a wider variety of military units became necessary. He suggests more

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[82] "Shintaisei," 191-2.

generally that the more massive scale of warfare exacerbated such difficulties in the maintenance of martial liberalism in the age of industrialized nation-states. For Ishiwara the most salient characteristic of such developments was that a shift towards the need for and practice of controlism in the military sphere correlated with the broader, non-military world as well. In short, he argued that World War I was the point at which the global-historical tide shifted from liberalism to controlism, and it was precisely at this point in his argument that he made the point of noting that controlism is the same thing as totalitarianism.[83]

In the same work Ishiwara emphasized that totalitarianism was "not a retrogression." The military analogy he had just given made this point clear: modern militaries had learned that liberalism on the battlefield did not work and that with controlism commanders could express their goals more clearly, while masses of soldiers could work together more efficiently. Thus for Ishiwara totalitarianism/controlism represented a progressive development towards a higher rationality. Controlism/totalitarianism was for Ishiwara a "synthesis" between liberalism and absolutism (*senseishugi*) and it amounted to the means to mobilize national energies in order to decisively win the Final War. Lastly, in order to

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[83] Ibid., 195-6.

"prove" the necessity of controlism/totalitarianism Ishiwara once again turned to the example of the Nazis, whose blitzkrieg tactics, he argued, were only possible due to German totalitarianism. This, he concluded, opened the eyes of remaining proponents of liberalism in Europe.[84]

However and despite his advocacy of totalitarianism/controlism, Ishiwara had the following caveat: the totalitarianism that the competing parties in the world's coming final conflict had turned to in the interest of efficiency would lead to a process of the global military encampment (*gasshukushugi*) of human societies in general. Ishiwara contended in the conclusion of *Saishū sensō ron* that this kind of militarization of the world was only necessitated by what he called a "super state of emergency" (*chōhijōji*). In other words, temporary, totalitarian measures were only necessitated by the singularly exceptional period or juncture in world history in or at which he believed himself to be living. For Ishiwara, such measures were only legitimate until a Japanese led East Asia could lead the world beyond the "hadōist" impasses of actually existing modernity, and into the post-Final War epoch.[85]

Ishiwara's Horizons of Expectation and his Map to the Future

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[84] Ibid, 196-7.
[85] Ibid., 197, and *Saishū sensō ron*, 59-60.

As evidenced by his writings and lectures circa 1940, Ishiwara believed that he was living through the most momentous crisis of human history. In this context of exceptionality, he incessantly called for East Asian unity as a means to prepare for humanity's last war, a conflict that would involve not just all able bodied men as with World War I, but also women and children, grass and trees, mountains, pigs and "even chickens."[86] All of these elements of national productive capacities would be involved in devising and constructing what we would now call a "weapon of mass destruction." This weapon would be delivered, according to Ishiwara, by aircraft that could circle the earth forever without landing, because they would be powered using hydrogen present in the stratosphere as an ever-renewable fuel. His envisioned WMD and its delivery via hydrogen-powered aircraft were only the destructive part of the course he charted for humanity's not too distant future, but he also wrote and spoke of constructive elements of the Final War. For Ishiwara, these constructive aspects more than made up for the fact that in his estimation the war might cut the world's population in half.[87]

Part of the benificial nature of Ishiwara's Final War would result from preparation for the war. The war and the harnessing of all East Asian resources toward the creation of a super weapon and a

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[86] *Saishū sensō ron*, 39.
[87] Ibid., 50.

super aircraft to deliver it would occasion a new industrial revolution in East Asia, which would be centered in Japan. He proposed that this industrial revolution would surpass the German "second industrial revolution" that he admired so much.[88] Another causal factor in the constructive quality of the Final War would arise in that war's aftermath, when an East Asia led by Japan would unify the world. Ishiwara frequently referred to world unification, along with everlasting peace as the "long held yearning" (*akogare*) of all humanity.[89] Despite his sincere desire that this yearning would be fulfilled without violence and bloodshed, Ishiwara believed that its fulfillment was worth "great sacrifice."[90] For him, any sacrifice was justified because after the Final war humanity's competitive spirit would no longer be consumed by war. He imagined that war would become impossible because of the invention of massively destructive weapons, and that humanity's competitive spirit would as a result be sublimated. Humanity would then focus all available resources on constructing a new "comprehensive" civilization, one that strove for the ideal of *hakkō ichiū*.[91]

Ishiwara borrowed from the thought of "a brilliant Japanese named Mr. Shimizu Yoshitarō" to illustrate some of the possibilities

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[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 51.
[90] Ibid., 60.
[91] Ibid., 77.

for scientific/technological development that would rapidly become reality after the Final War. Ishiwara wrote of advances in agriculture leading to the production of 1,500 times the present yields per any given piece of land. He imagined breeding bacteria that would taste like beef, pork or chicken, as a much easier alternative to raising actual livestock and poultry for sources of protein. Ishiwara claimed that this was no fantasy, as the Germans had already begun to produce bacteria as a consumable source of protein during the First World War. Ishiwara anticipated something similar to nuclear power when he suggested that radium and plutonium, as sources of "subterranean heat" could replace coal. He also imagined harnessing the "unlimited electricity of the atmosphere," resulting in an endless source of electricity for human use on the planet's surface. In this connection Ishiwara reiterated the possibility of utilizing hydrogen in the stratosphere as a source of energy.[92]

In a reference to one of Nichiren's predictions, Ishiwara went on to describe the post-Final War era as one in which humanity would realize the "wondrous law" of overcoming sickness and death (*furō fushi*) through extraction of the impurities (*rohaibutsu*) that

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[92] Ibid., 77-8. Ishiwara made direct reference to Shimizu's *Nihon shintaisei ron* (on Japan's true structure).

accumulate within people's bodies as they age.[93] In response to the possible criticism that this would lead to unmanageable population growth, Ishiwara suggested that people would not be motivated to procreate as in the pre-Final War era because they would not have impending death hanging over their heads. They would, he wrote, "live like gods."[94] Ishiwara went on to argue that because time is temperature, and according to him killing human beings leads to increases in temperature, the drop in global temperature following the Final War would lead to the realization of the dream of Urashimatarō.[95] Urashimatarō is a folkloric character that visits the palace of a dragon king under the sea and marries the king's daughter. Unbeknownst to Urashimatarō what seems like years under the sea are actually several decades on the world's surface, and in fact while under the sea his aging process is arrested. What Ishiwara meant by the relationship between temperature and time is not entirely clear, but it seems to be based on the idea that cold temperatures tend to slow down such processes as running water. Despite the oddity of

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[93] In a 1273 text titled *Nyosetsu shugyōshō* (compendium of austerities) Nichiren predicted that at a time when everyone (*banmin*) chants/reveres (*tonae-tatematsuru*) "*namu Myōhō rengekyō*" in unison, there would be no calamities and people would learn how to ensure longevity, not dying and not growing old (*furō fushi*). See entry on *Nyosetsu shugyōshō* in Miyazaki Eishū, *Nichiren Jiten* (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 1978), 213-14.
[94] *Saishū sensō ron*., 78-9.
[95] Ibid., 79.

some of Ishiwara's "scientific" prognostications, what is salient about his vision of the post-Final War world was that humans at that time would live in "perfect freedom," a freedom that Ishiwara emphasizes would be brought about through a "great leap" into a "comprehensive" global civilization. This was to be, he underscored, a humanly facilitated mutation in humanity.[96]

In his visions of the post-Final War future, Ishiwara combined the language of premodern millenarian discourse with a modern or modernist temporality. For example, on the one hand he wrote that the post-Final War world would be what in Buddhism is called the "age of Miroku," the Buddha that according to Māhayana doctrine would be born in this world in the distant future. On the other hand, he wrote that the realization of this age is not something that necessarily would occur all at once, but that it would instead be the fruit of human civilization's ceaseless progress. In sum, for Ishiwara, the present as "the greatest crisis in human history" was also a time in which humanity could realize the most fantastic dreams of development and unprecedented prosperity in a sudden progressive leap that he signified with his concept of the Final War.[97]

Conclusion: Breakthroughs, Dreams, and the Same Old Things

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[96] Ibid. Cf., *Kokubō ron* (on national defense, originally published in 1941) in *Ishiwara Kanji Senshū*, vol. 8, 140-4, where Ishiwara once again recounted his fantastic vision of post-Final War civilization.
[97] *Saishū sensō ron*, 79.

In conclusion I wish to discuss two of Ishiwara's favorite words, words one finds again and again in his writings, *toppa* 突破 (breakthrough) and *akogare* 憧れ (long cherished dream, yearning). *Toppa* signified a leap through a manmade "GAP" that humanity could pour through in an "exciting rush."[98] In other words, metaphorically it was like the longed for charge out of the trenches and triumphantly into enemy lines that characterized the usually unmet expectations of combatants during World War I.[99] Ishiwara's *akogare*—which he posited all of humanity shared—consisted of the desire to escape an actually existing modernity that Ishiwara commonly characterized as hadōist in his mature work.

Ishiwara conflated Western imperialism and what he considered to be the sorry state of China and East Asia with hadōism. He also acknowledged the hadōist activities and attitudes of Japanese in their relations with other Asians, including Japan's imperial subjects in Korea and Chinese nationals during the Second Sino-Japanese War. We can in this connection read hadōism as not just a reference to Western imperialism, but also as code for both Japanese imperialism an all of the pettiness and selfishness that Ishiwara

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[98] [98] This is a reference to the second epigraph at the beginning of this chapter. Quoted in Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), 247.

[99] See note 2 and the second epigraph at the beginning of this chapter.

claimed Japanese had fallen into in imitation of the modern West. Ishiwara's indictment of the West in these terms agrees strikingly with classically liberal ideas such as those of Thomas Hobbes, who first posited a brutish "state of nature" and then argued for the necessity of a utilitarian social contract between a people and their state or sovereign in order to preserve a modicum of social stability.[100] From Ishiwara's standpoint however, it is hardly surprising that the West's resultant sense of justice on a global level did not appear just, because nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western elites often enough regarded non-Western people (as well as lower classes and women within the metropolitan West) as too close to the primitive state of nature to participate in any thing like a social contract whatsoever.

In his ideas if not terminology Ishiwara's thought had consistencies, from his days as a recent convert to Nichirenism to his more mature writings on the Final War. Ishiwara's letters from Hankou testify to the immense joy he felt in his realization of communion with the universe, and he related this to his wife in the language of Nichirenism. He came to feel the immanence of the divine, Original Buddha in his life. His experience of immanent

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[100] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Barnes and Nobel, 2004), 89-93 (on state of nature), 94-104 and 124-128 (on the contract and the commonwealth).

divinity in this way inspired him to wish to actualize the doctrines of Nichiren Buddhism as interpreted by Chigaku. Through the use of the Japanese nation-state, which for him was always already united with the *Honbutsu* and the *Lotus Sūtra*, he wished to transform the mundane world into a paradise.

Nichirenism had awakened Ishiwara's *akogare* (yearning) for a *toppa* (breakthrough) to a universally better world. In other words, Ishiwara wanted to obliterate the gap between the hadōist realities of everyday experience and an expectation of a more adequate situation that he came to imagine in terms of the ōdōist "way of righteousness." For Ishiwara his present was simultaneously the greatest "juncture" and the ultimate "crisis" in human history because despite the inadequacies of his present, the obliteration of that gap was just over the horizon in his estimation, a conjecture he came to through his study of military history and Nichirenist doctrine.

We can certainly entertain serious doubts about Ishiwara's belief in Nichirenism. His Final War theory was undeniably performative. One can legitimately wonder about the degree to which he believed what he was writing was true and to what degree he either wanted it to be true or actively and consciously understood himself to be making the truth. The interwar period was undoubtedly the age of taking a cue from Sorel and engaging in modern, socially constructed

mythmaking. Ishiwara's admiration of Hitler and his "insight" suggests that he was at least somewhat aware of the performative utility of consciously constructed modern mythology. Moreover, the way that Ishiwara conveniently discerned a correspondence between the death of Dhārmapala and the birth of the Japanese crown prince suggests creative use of information to symbolize a coming union of Asian and Buddhist countries.[101] Sorel and Ishiwara differed in that Sorel believed that his aims could be realized in violence itself. For Ishiwara, violence and mythmaking were merely the means to an even more quintessentially modern end. He sought the realization of the latent promises of liberal democracy, namely universal justice, along with a genuine universalism. This universalism consistent with Enlightenment discourse, but Ishiwara put it in the Nichirenist language of "world unification" (*sekai tōitsu*).

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[101] Donald Lopez's excellent essay, "Belief," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (21-35), critically examines the category of belief in premodern and modern religiosity. He suggests that the prominence of the concept of belief was imposed on or superimposed over non-modern or non-Western forms of religious activity. I agree, but would like to add the caveat that while post-Protestant, modern religiosity tends to demand belief in the truth of doctrine, texts or tenets, even this kind of belief can be purely formal, instrumental, or mere superficial adherence to orthodoxy in order to avoid persecution. I would argue that there is always a fine line between belief and wanting to believe, for whatever reasons. Catherine Bell's essay on "Performance" in the same volume (205-24) also does a fine job of touching on issues involving the performative value of religiosities that may or may not involve belief to whatever degree.

However, modern temporalities tend to couple desire for collapsing the difference between experience and expectation with the propensity to suspend, at the level of the law, liberal democracy itself. Giorgio Agamben has argued that the propensity to declare such states of exception in the face of real or imagined crises goes back to the very inception of political modernity represented by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era. Agamben's work furthermore demonstrates how the right to declare states of exception is built into the constitutions of modern, liberal-democratic nation-states such as France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany and the United States. The most famous cases of states exercising the right to suspend civil liberties under supposedly exceptional conditions are of course Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. However, Agamben suggests that the Nazi and Fascist cases were not in themselves aberrant, or indeed, exceptional.[102]

Agamben largely refers to the "state of exception" as a legal-juridical phenomenon. He notes in this connection that the German and eventually Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt claimed that the propensity and ability to decree legal states of exception is the very foundation of the political sovereignty of the modern state in general.[103] The

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[102] Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attel Trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), especially, 1-23.
[103] Ibid., 35.

concept of the state of exception has broader implications, and Ishiwara's discourse on the Final War is a case in point. Ishiwara's believed himself to be living during crisis or state of exception, but he also thought his historical moment was a time of unprecedented opportunity. For him, it was a time during which humanity could shatter the difference between hadōist experience and ōdōist expectation. He described the demands of this exceptional state in terms of the suspension of liberalism, the embrace of controlism or totalitarianism, and even the military "encampment" of all of society.

However, the supposed exceptionality of the present typically leads to questionable activities only justified with reference to that exceptionality, and as Agamben's work suggests, the "state of exception" has tended to increasingly become the normal modern condition. In other words, we are still pining for a promised, more adequate world that never comes, and the leaders of modern nation-states increasingly posit the exceptionality of the present. This exceptionality corresponds with supposedly necessary wars on various "isms" that are reminiscent of hadōism the way Ishiwara defined it. Success in such wars is supposed to lead to utopian conditions that are likewise like ōdōism in Ishiwara's discourse. A true state of exception, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin, would consist of an altered and less imaginary relationship with the now of our

experience, along with an altered and perhaps in many ways severed relationship with an abstract and even more imaginary horizon of expectation.

In the end an irony of Ishiwara's theory of the Final War is that, despite his opinions to the contrary, the Second World War ended war in many ways. There have been no declared wars between major powers during the sixty years since 1945. The world has also gradually unified following World War II. At first the so-called free world unified under the hegemony of the United States. Following 1989 the US and the forces of global capital have unified almost the whole world. However, instead of an era of everlasting peace, the post-World War II world became one of nuclear détente (until circa 1989), and perpetual lukewarm and sometimes very hot war. During the long postwar period the US and the Soviets along with their satellites and client states constantly prepared for war, despite the fact that the two superpowers only fought wars (between each other and otherwise) in limited ways. Following the Cold War of course societies globally (but especially in the US) organize themselves around the always imminent and sometimes actualized possibility of warfare. This has been in terms of preparation and spending, as well as in terms of the constant threat and actual deployment of violence. In other words, the Final War has come, but it has never ended.

Contrary to Ishiwara's hopes and for better or worse, the American president and his circle have come to prevailingly exercise hegemony over the globe, and this world is generally unified, but in ways that are far from harmonious, peaceful, and characterized by justice.

Conclusion: Nichirenism and the Dialectics of Heterology

"I Pray that we will see the day as soon as possible when we welcome a world in which we do not have to kill enemies whom we cannot hate. For this end I would not mind my body being ripped innumerable times."

Miyazawa Kenji, *The Crow and the Great Dipper*

"It is little exaggeration to say that ultranationalistic *Lotus* millennialism died in August 1945 in the flames of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But even before these ruined cities had been rebuilt, a new *Lotus* Millennialism had risen to take its place. Postwar *Lotus* millennialism envisions a time when, by awakening to the universal Buddha nature, people everywhere will live in harmony and with mutual respect."

Jacqueline Stone, "Japanese *Lotus* Millennialism"

In 1929 or 1930 Georges Bataille proposed a "science of what is completely other," which he termed "heterology."[1] According to William E. Deal and Timothy K. Beal, Bataille's heterology "attends to that which is other and therefore cannot be assimilated …. It deals with that which is useless in a world driven by use-value and that which is wasteful in a world driven by production; it is pronounced

[1] Georges Bataille, "The Use Value of D. A. F. De Sade (An Open Letter to My Comrades)," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1936*, ed. and trans. Allen Stoekl (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 102, note 2.

evil in a world that reduces the sacred to moral goodness."[2] By focusing on Nichirenism as a movement "excreted" (as Bataille would say) from the homogeneity of overly simplified history—the standard narrative of how Japan came to be more-or-less like us—this dissertation has attempted to practice a form of heterology, and it should not be surprising that Bataille was one of my first intellectual heroes. But Bataille's heterology is a difficult tool to use with the requisite nuance.

Andrew Wernick calls throwing pies into the faces of people like Bill Gates and the massacre-suicide at Columbine High School in 1999 "heterological activism," writing that such actions are "absolutely unassailable to the ruling order."[3] To my mind the what he calls the "ruling order" has no problem assimilating what seemingly contradicts it and, yet, we who think about such things seem to have difficulty understanding how the "ruling order" and the heterological imbricate each other. Nichirenism is a good example of this imbrication, and its relationship with the heterological and the normal ruling order is complex. At a practical level the ruling order easily assimilated it in Japan, but at the ideological level—and

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[2] William E. Deal and Timothy K. Beal, *Theory for Religious Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 46.
[3] Andrew Wernick, "Bataille's Columbine: The Sacred Space of Hate" (1999), http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=119.

especially with regard to the postwar historiography of post-1945 Japan—Nichirenism remains difficult to assimilate

Nichirenism was not exceptional. It was a product of the modern world in which it appeared. In that context it represented evidence of the radical difference between what we generally suppose modernity to be, and what our experience tells us it is. When Chigaku called for "world unification" he was calling attention to the inadequacy of the way the world actually was. I read Chigaku's desire for unification as a desire for a completely conflict free world. This was not aberrant in itself, but Chigaku and his Nichirenism stimulated the desire to overcome the waiting game of liberal-capitalist temporality, and Nichirenists violently attempted to erase the difference between expectation and experience. Chigaku in short was both heterological and completely assimilated within the ruling order. Nichirenism's products—for example, the Manchurian Incident and the literature of Miyazawa—were easily assimilated by the ruling order as well.

Ishiwara engineered the Manchurian Incident contra the dictates and wishes of the upper-echelon of the Japanese army in Tokyo. He also had neither the consent nor approval of Japan's civilian leadership. But Manchuria became a model for everything that was supposed to be good about Japanese imperialism.

Manchuria tellingly also became a showcase for everything that was supposed to be good about the modern. For example, as Louise Young notes, the South Manchurian Railway represented itself as "an engine of civilization and progress," and when the railroad company unveiled a new high-speed train in 1934 called the "Asian Express," the train became "the symbol of an ultramodern empire where technological feats opened up new vistas of possibility in Japan."[4] Clearly, the ruling order in Japan thoroughly assimilated the effects of Ishiwara's heterological intervention. One might even say that his actions were assimilated by the project of modernity itself.

Sasaki Hachirō was a brilliant and extremely well read young man who majored in economics at Tokyo Imperial University before being drafted in 1943.[5] He was patriotic, but no supporter of the emperor and Japanese elites. He was deeply influenced by Marxism (reading *Capital* in German), and he hoped for the eventual end of Japanese capitalism. Sasaki referenced the first passage quoted at the head of this conclusion in an essay he wrote for a 1943 class reunion of his alma mater, the prestigious secondary institution, the First

[4] Young, *Japan's Total Empire,* 246-7.
[5] Emiko Ohkuni-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: The Militarization of Aesthetics in Japanese History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 193-4. In her discussion, Ohkuni-Tierney inventories what Sasaki read. In short, he read the work of just about every major figure one can think of in German, English, Russian, and ancient Greek philosophy, literature, and science.

Higher School. The essay was titled "Love, War, and Death: On Miyazawa Kenji's *The Crow and the Great Dipper*, and the words quoted above are those of a crow speaking to his guardian deity, the Great Dipper, just before going to war with another set of crows. In 1945 Sasaki volunteered to be a suicide pilot ("kamikaze") and he died as one later that year at the age of 22. In "Love, War, and Death," Sasaki expresses his admiration for Miyazawa, and notes the way that he identified with the words of the crow in the story. Through a strained logic Sasaki hoped that his death as a suicide pilot, ripping his body apart, would somehow help to end exploitative capitalism and facilitate the birth of a new, improved Japan. [6]

Miyazawa's Nichirenism-inspired literature seems to counter the ruling order or at least its governing logic, which is grounded in hierarchical binary oppositions. Miyazawa's work tears apart that commonsense and even suggests the possibility of a utopia unencumbered by the social inadequacies that he sought to combat as

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[6] Ohkuni-Tierney gives basic details about Sasaki as a kamikaze on (193) and addresses his admiration for Miyazawa on 199 and 202. Regarding Sasaki's strained logic, it is difficult for me to understand how he could have believed in the value of his death as a suicide pilot. Ohkuni'-Tierney's account suggests, however that his "volunteering" for that mission was not so voluntary after all, and he was attempting to make the best of the situation by convincing himself that his death would be worthwhile. I hypothesize that Miyazawa's literature and the ideal of self-sacrifice it expressed helped enable Sasaki's self-deception. Cf., especially Ohkuni-Tierney 194.

the leader of the Rasu Chijin Kyōkai. Miyazawa's utopian literature inspired people like Sasaki. But the heterological tendencies in Miyazawa's work were easily assimilated by Japan's ruling order. In fact the notion that Japan was itself ushering in a better world by defeating Western imperialism already encompassed aspects of the heterological through its challenge of the Orientalist dichotomy that generally posits the West as superior to Asia. Nonetheless Japanese capitalists used anti-imperialist imperialism to enrich themselves, and Japanese political leaders used the state of emergency occasioned by imperialist war to impose social discipline that buttressed their power.

Moreover, as fascism from below set stage for that from above, even the more radically antinomian or heterological actions of Nichirenist terrorists during the 1930s dovetailed with the ruling order. For example, Inoue Nisshō indirectly killed an industrialist and a politician. The events of the Shōwa Restoration of which the Ketsumeidan Incident was a part set the stage for Japan's transformation into a total police state, and this managed to channel national energies into an aggressive expansionism that served the immediate interests of political and economic elites more than ever before. The radical heterology of Nichirenists like Inoue was fully assimilated by the ruling order.

It does not seem that there is anything that cannot be assimilated by the ruling order. The ruling order is a ruling disorder from another perspective, one that perhaps Benjamin indicated when he wrote of the "tradition of the oppressed."[7] In other words, and as I stated in my introduction, I believe that capitalism/modernity thrives on its own contradictions—setting it in opposition to previous social formations perhaps and thus confounding Marxist-Hegelian prognostication. However, it also seems that we need to pretend that the world and history are simpler than they actually are. In short, we seem to need to live in a "normal," yet artificial, condition that disconnects us from our experience, and one of the most important tools for constructing such illusions is historiography.

In artificially constructing a normal condition that is relatively free of contradiction, we tend to make two interrelated moves. First, we consign general inadequacies to the past. Thus in the postwar historiography of Japan, Nichirenism—and fascism or militarism—have come to signify what we citizens of the "free world" have left behind. Secondly, we explain away the inadequacies of the present by positing that the present is in a transitional state of exception. The message is that whatever violence, societal strife, and economic difficulties we may be experiencing, these problems will be overcome

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[7] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Harry Zohn trans. *Illuminations* (New York: Shocken Books, 1968), 257,

on the horizon, one which in actuality steadily becomes increasingly distant as we seemingly approach it.

Rather than figuring Nichirenism as a sign of what we have supposedly left behind in a narrative of progressive development, I prefer to imagine Nichirenism as signifying that contemporary forms of violence in our present that seem to appear as suddenly as the Japanese planes that destroyed "paradise" in the film "Pearl Harbor" are nothing new. Perhaps Japanese have a charmed existence when it comes to historiography. Article nine of the constitution imposed by MacArthur's occupation forbade military aggression, enabling the illusion that postwar Japan has a special relationship with the ideal of peace. What really happened was that Japan became integral to the both the ideological and military strategies of the United States in the context of the Cold War. Japan's postwar "economic miracle" might have been impossible were it not for preferential arrangements the US made with Japan because of its "model minority" position in the US order of things. Japan's role in servicing US armed forces during the two post-1945, US-led "police actions" in East and Southeast Asia greatly facilitated the "miracle" as well.

One ramification of these considerations is that the actual difference between postwar Nichiren-based, lay organizations such as Risshō Kōseikai and Sōka Gakkai on the one hand, and prewar

Nichirenism on the other, is not a difference in ideals or ideology. Both the postwar groups and the earlier organizations wanted peace in a world more-or-less led by Japan. They differ because of the fact that prewar Nichirenists were indirectly or directly connected to the military apparatus of a major imperialist power, whereas the analogous postwar groups are not. In other words, what makes Japan unique with respect to questions of peace is not due to the country's firsthand experience of the horrors of nuclear war, nor is it because of article nine. Rather, the reason for Japan's uniqueness has instead been largely because of the country's special postwar relationship with the United States.[8]

More broadly, I think it is important to confront the ways in which Nichirenists—and fascists or militarists—were not so different from us after all. In other words, Nichirenism was not an atavistic throwback to the premodern and evidence of pre-1945 Japanese insufficient development. Confronting even the possibility that what I am stating is true constitutes a form of heterology that is not so easily assimilated by the intellectual hegemony that dominates us. Contemplating ways that we are not so different from Nichirenists

[8] Cf., Stone, "Japanese *Lotus* Millennialism," 279. On the status of Japan before and during its subsumption under US hegemony see Bruce Cummings, "Archeology, Descent, Emergence: Japan in British/American Hegemony, 1900-1950," in Harootunian and Miyoshi eds., *Japan in the World*, (Durham: Duke University Press,1993), 79-114.

means on one level, ironically, a consideration of our sameness (homology) with what we have excreted from the purity of our self-representations. In doing this, however, we focus on the difference between those representations and more fundamental actualities, actualities that experience or the "tradition of the oppressed" may confirm.

If we do not consider ways that our modernity, here and now, is connected to that abjected or excreted modernity represented by pre-1945 militarist or fascist Japan, then we, again, would not be acting and thinking so differently from the ways Nichirenists acted and thought. They too worked within the framework of liberal-capitalist and modern temporality, consigning responsibility for the inadequacies of the present to someone else and someplace else, while positing the present as a transitional "state of exception" to be overcome on the ever-receding horizon. They also engaged in both illicit and legitimate (state) violence, which is certainly not foreign to our current situation. However, some of that violence was merely conceptual.

Miyazawa's literature is a good example of the conceptual violence of Nichirenism, and his conceptual violence links his work to literary modernism in general. However, I think that an even more significant example of conceptual violence arising from Nichirenism

can be found in Seno'o's dialectical materialist Buddhism. Seno'o refused to defer "piercing the veil" of modern life. In other words he practiced a critical form of Buddhism for which nothing was too sacred to question and to historicize, including the nation and Buddhism itself. Seno'o's conceptual violence went beyond transgressing commonsense. He did not just oppose a new form to old ones, the way that Chigaku and Ishiwara posited Buddhism as superior to Christianity and Japan as superior to the United States. Instead Seno'o questioned the system of hierarchical binaries, suggesting the possibility of overcoming delusory pseudo-belief in ghostly forms such as the nation or in "our" inherent goodness. In other words, Seno'o's heterology—or heterodoxy—involved not just the replacement of the "normal" with its "other." It involved conceptualizing both terms as contingent and in flux. Seno'o would have made a good historian.

The main point of these musings on the heterological is that, first of all, there was nothing exceptional about Nichirenism. It was a product of the modern, and when it appeared to constitute a violence that threatened the ruling order, or the status quo, or liberal-capitalist normality, it was all too easily assimilated by the dominant forces it appeared to contest. Secondly, however, refusing to regard Nichirenism and all that it represents as wholly different from

elements characterizing our own, current milieu entails the possibility of understanding how and why we differ from our self-representations. This in turn would entail the possibility of not so easily falling into conceptualizations of history supporting the idea that inadequacies in the present are somehow exceptional, and that they will be overcome more-or-less automatically if we continue to follow the natural, logical, or commonsensical course. It would be mistaken to assume that I am denigrating the notion of progress when I claim that we have not escaped the sort of problems that plagued pre-1945 Japan. On the contrary, I hope that through recognizing our own circumstances more clearly we may "bring about a real state of emergency,"[9] which I imagine as the emergence of a better world.

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[9] Benjamin, 257.

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